MARYVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA:

An All-Black Town and its White Neighbors

by

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Introduction

Most introductions brag that the ensuing work will fill a gap in the historiography of the subject at hand. I would like to suggest only that this paper will add an interesting chapter to a gap that is already being rapidly filled. It seeks to present a history of Maryville, an all-black town in South Carolina, with only a minimal investigation of black towns as a whole. The all-black town has been mistreated and perhaps underestimated, but has not exactly been ignored, especially since the nineteen-sixties. Until Carter Woodson's *The Rural Negro*, historical treatments of all-black towns were cursory if not scornful.[1] Unlike the authors of subsequent surveys of black American history, Woodson was willing to go into issues of local or even personal history, as well as racial pride and solidarity. Praising all-black towns as conducive to the "higher strivings" of the race, he listed more than seventy-five, and cursorily summarized the efforts of a few with tributes to their founders and guiding lights, or with short quips--New Africa, Mississippi being "not too far removed from the old."[2] Woodson was more concerned with the current performance of the towns than with their historical origin, and he gave only a superficial treatment of the underlying ideologies and historical forces that provided for the formation of all-black towns. For example, he suggested that black towns existed only at crossroads or depots which were somehow "missed" by white settlement. Woodson's chapter is most valuable in indicating the frequency of black towns in the South. Over forty on his list are in the Southern states, and even this number evidently falls short, for Woodson omitted at least Maryville, Lincolnville, and Promised Land,

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[1]Henry A. M. Smith, *Cities and Towns of Early South Carolina*, Vol.II of *The Historical Writings of Henry A. M. Smith* (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1988), 219.

[2]Carter G. Woodson, *The Rural Negro* (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1930), 117.

South Carolina, and James City and Princeville, North Carolina.[3] I cannot complete his list, but I hope to disprove Woodson's comment that "there is not much of interest in these towns for the outsider."[4]

Although Woodson's remains the closest thing to a comprehensive treatment of black towns, a 1979 book by Norman Crockett entitled *The Black Towns* is perhaps the best investigation of the historical forces behind them, though it is restricted to a few promoted towns in Kansas and Oklahoma, plus Mound Bayou, Mississippi, America's most famous and successful black town.[5] The author who treats most directly the richness and variety of black communities is Edward Magdol in *A Right to the Land; Essays on the Freedmen's Community*. [6] Reading his accounts of Reconstruction struggles for land and social organization in light of the communities that still exist in the South was crucial in alerting me to the variety and importance of black towns.

Most other books and articles on the subject would fall under the rubric of "local history." Local history is often considered by many of us in the academic world to be an inferior product to those histories which focus instead on an era or a phenomenon. Its methods and its products are associated with amateurs who collect the folk tales and gossip of their favorite vacation spot, or, even worse, delve deep into obscure local records only to illustrate a genealogical point or to blindly "preserve their heritage." But local history can be an elegant way of exposing in a manageable and sympathetic format the issues and events that define history. Melissa Faye Green and Amelia Wallace Vernon (an amateur) portray the black communities of Southern towns with intimate narrative and sophisticated insight.[7] Both of these writers base their books on interviews rather than documents, another point of disgust for many historians.

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[3]Woodson, *Rural Negro*, 114-120; Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland, A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple U. Press, 1981).
[4]Woodson, *Rural Negro*, 124.
[5]Norman L. Crockett, *The Black Towns* (Lawrence: Regents Press of KS, 1979).
[6]Edward Magdol, *A Right to the Land: Essays on the Freedmen's Community* (Contributions in American History, No.61 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977).
[7]Melissa Faye Green, *Praying for Sheetrock* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1991); Amelia Wallace Vernon, *African-Americans at Mars Bluff, South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1993).

Oral sources have traditionally been the province of sociology, folklore, and journalism, rather than history. But the use of personal sources is often crucial in local history, and cannot be tastefully avoided the way that genealogy and amateurism can. Dealing with a community like Maryville, which was a small and economically insignificant town, rarely and patronizingly mentioned by the Charleston newspaper, and-- no longer existing as an institution-- with no repository of documents, requires recourse to people who can testify in some way to events in question. What's more, effective local history deals as much with who people are and how they discuss their situation as with a simple explication and explanation of the facts. Previous attempts to deal with issues like those involved in a history of Maryville-- focusing on specific towns, isolated events, and oral sources-- have often arrived on bookshelves as journalism, sociology, and "local history" in its worst sense. I will incorporate some of these sources as I consider black towns in American history, and I may even adopt some of their methods in writing about Maryville itself.

With the hope that someday a comprehensive historical picture of black towns and their place in Southern life and black thought will be incorporated into the general historiography of the race and country, I have focused in the meantime on one small place and incident. In Lytton Strachey's language, I have tried to lower a little bucket into the briny depths of South Carolina history to bring up "to the light of day" a small but fascinating specimen-- a starfish of a species which is not the most common, but is perhaps a crucial link in the undersea food chain.[8]

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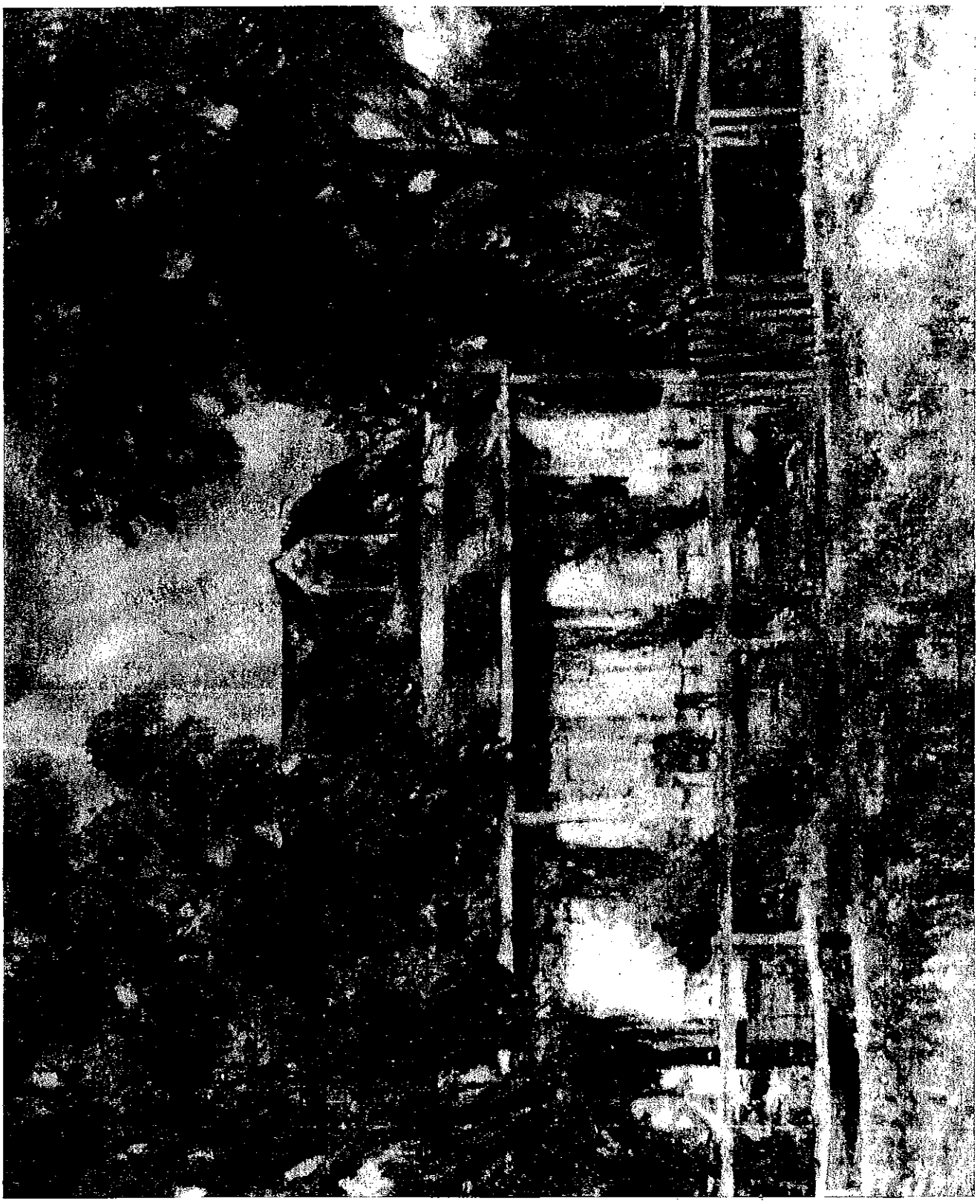
[8]Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), 6.

Chapter One

Maryville in the 1920s

Charleston, South Carolina is built on a spit of land nearly surrounded by water. The analogy offered to those approaching for the first time is to the geography of New York City, since Charleston also occupies a south-pointing peninsula. The Battery in Charleston is Battery Park in New York, Broad Street is Wall Street, the Cooper River is the East River, and the Ashley River is the Hudson. Although there are bluffs along the upper parts of the Ashley River that might be said to correspond to the Palisades, the land down around Maryville (in the position of Jersey City) is very flat and sandy. A hill is a rise of ten feet above sea level, no matter how steep. Unpaved roads are soft white tracks cutting across fields or curving through the woods. The rivers and creeks are not hurrying melted snows to the sea, but are themselves narrow extensions of the ocean, which often curve around to meet each other, and so have no head or tail. The "sea islands" formed by these meanders are often farther from the ocean than parts of the mainland are.

Again like New York, urban growth around Charleston in the twentieth century has obliterated the line separating city from countryside, and the city itself has expanded into areas that were the rural hinterlands for hundreds of years. One of these areas is Maryville, an all-black town which had just thoroughly established itself when the real estate boom of the 1920s began. What success Maryville had been able to achieve in effective isolation during forty years was in real danger when suddenly its citizens found that they had more than one or two white neighbors.



This painting portrays the serenity and security that Maryville's residents sought and found in their town.[9] The yellow grass evokes late fall briskness, but the brightness of morning light warming the closed shutters offers a respite from the chilly shadows of the side yard. Leaning against such a sun-warmed wall on a cool morning relaxes the muscles and calms the heart. This house might seem to stand alone in the countryside, for no neighbors are visible, but the front fence would be ridiculous outside of a town where lots are delimited and neighbors are to be kept away from the pecans.

Edwin A. Harleston gave this painting as a wedding present to Dr. Herbert U. Seabrook and Miriam DeCosta in June of 1923; it portrays the "Seabrook Homestead" in Maryville, South Carolina.[10] Neither Harleston nor Herbert Seabrook called Maryville home; they lived in the city of Charleston across the Ashley River, and came to the house of Herbert's mother Amerinthia in Maryville in retreat from hot and crowded city life.[11] Edwin Harleston, after a stint at Harvard Medical School in 1905, attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He then returned to Charleston and pursued his career as a painter, gaining distinction particularly for his portraits. In 1916, Harleston organized the Charleston chapter of the NAACP, and in 1919 he helped lead a successful petition drive to the state capitol to demand that the city's black schools be staffed by black teachers.[12] Dr. Seabrook was a close friend of Harleston's; their brothers and sisters had gone to school together at the Avery Institute, Charleston's most prestigious high school for African-Americans. The DeCostas, Seabrooks, Harlestons, and Forrests (both Edwin Harleston and his brother married Forrest sisters) would often repair to Maryville for social gatherings and special occasions during the twenties.

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[9]Edwin A. Harleston, *Seabrook Homestead* (oil on canvas, 1923), reprinted with permission of Miriam DeCosta-Willis.

[10]Edwina Whitlock and Helen Shannon, *Edwin A Harleston: Painter of an Era, 1882-1931*, catalogue of exhibition (Detroit, MI: Your Heritage House, 1983).

[11]Edwina Harleston Whitlock, interview by author, telephone, 10/31/95.

[12]*The Crisis* 22, 58-60; Whitlock and Shannon, 13.

Crossing the Ashley River Bridge from Charleston, they turned right on the River Road, and then right again after a mile or so onto Sycamore Avenue, the southern boundary of the town of Maryville. This white sandy street led through patches of mossy woods and past several small neat clapboard houses, curving to the north to end at the landing on Old Town Creek. Just before the landing, the Harleston car turned right onto Fifth Avenue, crossing Main Street to get to the Seabrook homestead, which looked out over the marsh to the river and beyond to the steeples of Charleston. The men helping the ladies down out of the car and opening up the doors and shutters of the house would have looked forward with confidence to an evening or weekend of conversation, dining, card playing, dancing, and tennis on the lawn.[13]

As it got too dark for tennis, a young man who lived around the corner would come by lighting the lamps, and after supper the party would move a half block up Fifth Avenue.[14] There, at the heart of town-- the intersection of its three important streets, Main, Sycamore, and Fifth Avenue-- was Invincible Park, a town block landscaped with pecan trees and a pond, with a large pavilion where dances were held, and where, later, the big bands would play when they came through Charleston.[15] This property was owned by a black company, the Invincible Association, though the mortgage was foreclosed in the late twenties by their bank, the People's Federation Bank.[16] Hired by the Invincible Association to run the pavilion was a man named Joe Truere, known as "Jew Joe" even among Charleston's Jewish community. Maryville remembers Jew Joe only as the proprietor of Invincible Park, but in fact he wore many hats, and was famous for being a man who "performed all the deeds in a diplomatic manner," whether it was bootlegging or concealing Jewish refugees from Germany.

> "Jew Joe" was a fellow-- they had prohibition-- and when they done away with prohibition "Jew Joe" went to work-- they were bringing in these truckloads of beer from all over the country and he would hijack the beer and bring it to

[13]Edwina Whitlock, 10/31/95.
[14]John Carr, 10/28/95.
[15]Leroy Gethers, 11/1/95.
[16]The People's Federation Bank was one of two black-owned banks in Charleston.

> Charleston to sell it. He used to have nightclubs and all-- he was a real fine fellow. On Yom Kippur night he would come to shul with a few hundred dollars in his pocket and you know Jews are not supposed to carry money on Yom Kippur and he would take all the money out of his pocket and put it in the plate in the shul. He was a poor man all his life-- he never did have anything but he believed in giving money to the shul, and he believed in helping people. He used to do all kinds of things for a living-- there wasn't any one thing he did.[17]

Jew Joe lived in Charleston, where one of the things he did was own a kosher meat market, but he came to Invincible Park to preside over the concerts and parties on weekends.[18]

Across Main Street from Invincible Park and next door to the Seabrook homestead lived Middleton Grant, one of the mayors of Maryville.[19] Grant's wife had died, but in middle age he adopted the old people of the town as his family, checking on them to make sure they were doing all right, and driving them into the city in his car, one of the few in Maryville, to visit relatives.[20] Everyone called him Babe because he was such a sweet favorite, and they would go by his store just to talk with him. Grant's grocery store, right next to his house on the corner of Main Street and Fifth Avenue, was not the biggest store in town, but it was convenient for everyone who lived on the east side of town near the river (known as Ashleyville), and it was owned by a black man who was always involved in the town government.[21] When Grant was about forty-five, he married a woman from Hampton County, and started a family of his own. But he continued to keep his obligations to Maryville, and served as mayor during the late twenties.

Back down Fifth Avenue toward River Road was the town hall, where the mayor and the police department conducted business. Downstairs in the two-storey wooden

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[17]Max Goldman, interview by Ruth Jacobs, 3/3/89 (Charleston Jewish Community Center Oral History Project, Special Collections, College of Charleston Library).
[18]Charleston County R.M.C., Direct Index to Real Estate Mortgages, 1898-1964; *Walsh's 1923 Charleston, South Carolina City Directory* (Asheville, NC: House of Directories, 1923), no pagination; by 1945, Jew Joe had switched lanes completely, and was running Mother Kelly's Barbecue.
[19]Later in the twenties. In 1923, Robert B. Moultrie was mayor, Wm. Bradley, clerk (notice of extension).
[20]Fourteenth Census of the United States, Population Schedules 1920, Charleston County, Enumeration District 92, sheet 3B; Hazel Higgins, interview by author, 10/27/95.
[21]Sworn Election Returns, July 25, 1910.

building was a large room where public meetings and social functions were held. Upstairs was the jail, where petty thieves and violators of the town's drunkenness ordinances spent the night. If the prisoners were lucky, the mayor's young wife brought in a serving of the Grant family dinner.[22] The police department was the pride of the town. Maryville and Lincolnville (a similar black town in another part of Charleston County) employed the only black policemen in the state; they could be seen walking the streets, patrolling the grounds of Invincible Park (and nearby hideaways) during dances, and seeking to maintain the good reputation of the town.[23] Levi Snipe was called Chief by everyone in town because of his position on the force; Thato Ancrum and Eugene Davis were also prominent policemen. According to Leroy Gethers, in a recent short speech recalling Maryville's history,

> Other police, even Chief, they were afraid to show their gun, you know, they keep their gun under cover. Eugene Davis, when he become a policeman he went somewhere and bought or found an old cap-- I think he found it because it looked old and beat up-- and got a belt and a holster, and he'd walk up and down Magnolia Road [River Road], with that big gun on his side. People visiting Middleton and Magnolia Gardens, they'd look, look at that big black man with a big gun on his side, and he'd walk up and down. He wasn't afraid.[24]

As a child, Gethers helped plant two cedar trees in front of the Deming Elementary School down near the town hall on Fifth Avenue, where Maryville's children were educated through the sixth grade. In 1923 Ms. Marie P. Tobin moved from the nearby community of Red Top to teach at the Deming school. She later became the principal, and she taught almost every child in Maryville over a period of about forty years.[25] Fifth Avenue, an old road lined with large overhanging oaks, then crossed over an arm of marsh on a wooden bridge, and curved around to pass by Emanuel A.M.E. Church. Emanuel was only one of the four main churches in town, but it was the oldest, founded in 1887 before Maryville was incorporated as a town.

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[22]Hazel Higgins, 10/27/95.
[23]John Carr, interview by author, 12/30/94.
[24]Bishop Leroy Gethers, speech at Emanuel A.M.E. Church, 5/26/93, recorded by Bobbie Auld.
[25]Hazel Higgins, 10/27/95; John Carr, 11/8/95. Maryville families had to send their children into Charleston to get a higher education.

At the opposite end of Fifth Avenue from Middleton Grant's store was Frederick Wigger's store. Wigger's, on the corner of Fifth Avenue and the River Road, was the main store in 1920s Maryville. It was a typical general store, selling everything from sides of beef to little candies. It also served as the Maryville post office, not only because it was Maryville's center of activity, but also because it was across the road from the platform of Albemarle Station, a small depot on the Seaboard Air Line tracks.[26] Frederick Wigger had lived in Maryville, but he and his son moved to Charleston, and came over to open the store every day.

Across Fifth Avenue from Wigger's store was Robert Miller's house. Miller's real name was Chu Homm, but after immigrating from China in 1896 he adopted his wife's family name.[27] Mr. Miller was known around Maryville, and indeed all of St. Andrews Parish, as "the Chinaman."[28] He too ran a small store, where his brother Chu Chy helped him, selling strawberries and other produce that they grew on their land.[29] Back down the River Road toward Charleston, across the railroad tracks, were more strawberry fields, on land owned by the Smalls family, the largest black landowners in the area.[30] They rented out their land to Maryville farmers, like Oscar Gethers, whose family was "able to survive" because of the income from berry farming. Gethers' son, Leroy, used to run up Sycamore Avenue and take a short cut through the woods along the river to get across the bridge to the Lincoln Theater in Charleston before five o'clock, when the price of admission went from ten to fifteen cents.[31]

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[26]John Carr, 10/11/95.

[27]John Carr, 12/30/94; Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 127; Charleston County R.M.C., deed in book Z30, p.196.

[28]Arthur Ravenel, Jr. to Clemon Richardson, 3/12/56, Emanuel A.M.E. Church records, Avery Institute. St. Andrews Parish is a rural judicial district of Charleston County which stretches along the west side of the Ashley River.

[29]Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 92, sheet 1B.

[30]Leroy Gethers, 10/27/95.

[31]Leroy Gethers, 10/27/95; Louise Brown remembered that these woods were thick and "dark as night." Walking through them frightened her because she associated them with the murder of a young boy, one of her neighbors, by an old man who lived in the town. The old man was a freedman named William Mims, who had moved to Maryville from Edgefield county in the 1880's. Mims reportedly remembered "carrying his 'young masser' to school." He was evidently obsessed with money, and killed his nine-year old neighbor to collect on a life insurance policy he had taken out, claiming to be the child's uncle. The newspaper

Sycamore Avenue was better known among Maryville residents as Jew Burying Ground Road, because it ran past the cemetery of Synagogue Brith Sholom.[32] The cemetery was within the limits of the town, and was in part the legacy of the woman who founded Maryville. Mary Richardson Moses, though evidently not a practicing Jew, came from one of the state's largest Jewish families.[33] Mary Moses sold the land for the cemetery to a man named Chevra Bikur Holim, who conveyed it to his own small congregation, which later joined with Brith Sholom.[34] Evidently the land was used for burials even before the purchase was completed in 1887, perhaps indicating that Mary did have more than a financial interest in selling land for a Jewish cemetery.

Much more important than her sympathies with the Jewish community, though, was Mary Moses' desire to found a town for the black residents of the state. In this respect she was in step with some of the foremost black thinkers and politicians of the time, including two residents of Charleston, Martin R. Delany, the "father of black nationalism," and Richard H. Cain, Reconstruction Congressman and founder of Lincolnville, the state's other incorporated black town.[35]

Mary Moses was the daughter of Franklin J. Moses, Jr., the governor of South Carolina from 1872 to 1874. Moses was one of the most despised and repudiated figures in state history. He was born and raised in Sumter, South Carolina, and served the Confederacy during the Civil War as Governor Pickens' secretary. In fact, he gained minor celebrity as the man to raise the Confederate flag over Fort Sumter after the first

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reported after his arrest that he had other insurance policies on his neighbors, and quoted him as saying his neighbors were jealous of him because they wanted his money. Charleston *News and Courier*, 12/24/31, 12/25/31. See Fox Butterfield, *All God's Children* (New York: Knopf, 1995) for a discussion of white Edgefield County as the source of American violence.

[32]John Carr, 4/10/95.

[33]Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1905; reprint, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Co., 1974), 199; Herbert A. Moses, "Pertaining to the Moses Family" (Sumter, S.C., 1963, College of Charleston Special Collections), p.5.

[34]Solomon Breibart, "The Jewish Cemeteries of Charleston," *Carologue*, Summer 1993, 16; Charleston County R.M.C., deed of Taft to "Hervey Beckier Cholim," Book A 31 Page 294.

[35]Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1978).

battle of the war.[36] After the war, Moses returned to Sumter to edit the *Sumter News*, from which position he was thrown out when his editorials began to show Republican sympathies.[37] He threw his hat into the ring of Republican politics, and was elected to the 1868 Constitutional Convention in Charleston. He served as speaker of the house in the state legislature, and was elected governor in 1872. Moses apparently deserved the title of "the Robber Governor," for his regime was thoroughly corrupt; but what really exercised South Carolina white society was the governor's practice of inviting black people to his dinners and balls, and of fraternizing with black women in public.[38] Moses' wife divorced him during his political career and moved to Washington with the children, including Mary, who was born in 1862.[39] After Moses failed to be nominated for re-election, his political career was over. He reportedly ended as a vagrant criminal, serving time in Boston for swindling Thomas Wentworth Higginson out of $34, and dying, perhaps by suicide, in a hotel in Winthrop, Massachusetts, in 1907. [40]

But Mary Moses' father did have some important and legitimate ideas about governing South Carolina during its struggle to realign society after the Civil War and to work out a viable economic system. He has been memorialized by his only apologist as a "proto-New Dealer," a characterization supported even by the statements of unsympathetic South Carolina historians.[41] In the state constitutional convention of 1868, Moses led the financial committee that recommended against any limit on the amount of debt that could be contracted by the state legislature. The state's leading historians commented (before 1932) on this decision, "delegates professed to see visions of

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[36]Francis B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 1932), 126.
[37]Anne King Gregorie, *History of Sumter County South Carolina* (Sumter: Library Board of Sumter Co., 1954), 284; Simkins and Woody, 126.
[38]Simkins and Woody, 370; Gregorie, 325-6.
[39]Herbert Moses, 5; Population Schedules 1870, Sumter County, SC (ser. M593, roll 1486).
[40]Simkins and Woody, 545; Gregorie, 337.
[41]Christopher Dell, "Franklin J. Moses: Proto-New Dealer and Reconstruction Governor" (Washington Grove, MD, n.d.). In American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

industrial progress through state aid. They declared that railroads, schools, and poorhouses must be built and lands distributed among the people."[42]

The distribution of land was in fact the most important point in the Radical Republican program. As one of the most vocal delegates to the state Constitutional Convention of 1868, Franklin J. Moses Jr. favored a proposal to petition Congress for a loan of one million dollars to purchase land for the freedmen. He argued, "you cannot make citizens out of these people unless you give them those things which make men citizens. Give them land; give them houses. They deserve it from the people of South Carolina. They deserve it for protecting the families of those who were away from their homes during the late war."[43] Mary Moses spent her early life in Charleston during this time when so much talk and action were aimed at getting land for the freedmen. She may have absorbed some of this rhetoric, and perhaps her own later actions indicate that her father was serious about land redistribution, and not just fishing for votes.

After her father's downfall, Mary married one of his political colleagues, Christopher Columbus Bowen. Bowen had in fact led a faction of the Republican party in unsuccessfully opposing Moses' gubernatorial campaign in 1872. He was Charleston County's most prominent political figure, having served as the first Radical Republican congressman from the district, and then as sheriff of Charleston County from 1872 until his death eight years later.[44] Bowen's public life was nearly as full of scandal as Governor Moses'. In 1875 he became embroiled in deadly conflict with the Charleston newspaper, the *News and Courier*. The *News and Courier* reminded its readers regularly that this "tough character" from Georgia had conspired to have his superior officer murdered during the Civil War.[45] Bowen sued for libel, but the proceedings turned into Bowen's

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[42]Simkins and Woody, 103.

[43]South Carolina Constitutional Convention (1868), *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of South Carolina, 1868* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 434.

[44]Charleston *News and Courier*, 6/24/1880, p.4.

[45]*News And Courier*, 6/24/1880, p.1. Bowen had been imprisoned in Charleston by the Confederate army for murder, by the Freedmen's Bureau for cheating the freedmen in 1866, and in Washington for bigamy in 1871.

trial "for murder, forgery, bigamy, and general rascality," rather than that of the *News and Courier* editors for libel.[46] He gained nothing but a damaged reputation and heavy debts.

Bowen had ensured the besmirchment of his name in South Carolina history by taking on the newspaper, which reprinted an account of its triumph over him on relevant occasions or anniversaries for decades afterwards.[47] It is difficult to see beyond the bias of the newspaper when it is the sole source on topics of local or social history, and thus impossible to corroborate, or rather to contradict. As contrary evidence in the case of C.C. Bowen, we have only a credit report from a Charleston businessman in 1878, who admitted that Bowen was not a good credit risk because of financial judgments against him. He asserted that, "his standing in the community is not good, . . . he has been accused of many bad acts, but the writer thinks that many of them were merely from political opponents and that he has been sinned against."[48]

The writer also revealed that Bowen was only superficially destitute; "he has some property but in the name of others." Some of this property was in the form of Hillsboro plantation, a tract of about 550 acres in St. Andrews Parish-- a rural political subdivision of Charleston County across the Ashley River from the city of Charleston.[49] One of Bowen's associates bought the land at public auction in 1879, and then transferred it to Mary's name.[50] When Bowen died in 1880, Mary was left with Hillsboro. The next year she married William Nelson Taft, a Rhode Islander who had came to Charleston as a young soldier and worked his way up in the political world.[51] Known as General Taft because of his position in the National Guard (called the Negro Militia by whites), Taft served two terms as a state senator, and was appointed postmaster of Charleston at the

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[46]John S. Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: The State Co., 1905), 314.
[47]*News and Courier*, 1/9/98, p.9
[48]R. G. Dun and Co. Record Books, Charleston, SC, vol. 3, page 72.
[49]John Wilson's plat of May 3, 1826, South Carolina Historical Society.
[50]Charleston County R.M.C., deed recorded in book Z17, p.13.
[51]According to the *News and Courier's* obituary of June 24, 1880, the news of Bowen's death was sent by Senator Taft, who had accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Bowen to New York.

PLAT OF HILLSBORO

The property of Mrs W. R. Taft as subdivid
the request of W. R. Taft Esq.
situate upon west bank of the
St Andrews Parish, Berkeley County S.C
Outlines of plat taken from J.

time that he married Mary.[52] In 1885, Mary Taft had Hillsboro platted and subdivided into lots of about ten acres each.[53] A few months later, she had it subdivided again into much smaller lots of 50 by 100 feet, with named streets laid out more or less in a grid.[54] That same year she began to sell lots to black families and individuals, and by 1888, a year before General Taft's death, Maryville had been incorporated as a town by the state legislature.[55]

Too little is known about the formalities of the foundation and organization of Maryville to make for any definite statements. Mary Taft herself seems to have been intimately involved. In order to keep the land from falling out of the control of the community, she arranged for her estate to cover the all the taxes that went unpaid. This allowed her to regain it and control to whom it was resold.[56] She signed over two hundred deeds between 1886 and 1906, selling the land for about twenty-five dollars for each 50 by 100 foot lot.[57] Current residents assert that Taft "imported" a black man from New York, named Bright, to be the first mayor of the town.[58] This may or may not be a myth, as Mary herself has been erroneously reported to be from New York, but there is a record of an Isaac Bright buying a lot in Maryville in 1890.[59] Whether or not he was the first mayor cannot be documented, because the records of the town have been lost-- scattered among the descendants of its leading citizens or buried in the shuffle of papers between funeral homes, museums, and archives.

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[52]N. Louise Bailey, ed., *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate* (Columbia: U.S.C. Press, 1986), 1574.
[53]William B. Guerard, Plat of Hillsboro, November 1885, S.C. Historical Society.
[54]S. Louis Simons, Plat of Part of Hillsboro, January 1886, Berkeley County R.M.C., Book A, p.11.
[55]Charleston County R.M.C. Direct Index to Conveyances and Miscellaneous Deeds from 1881 to 1898, p.335; Statutes at Large of SC 1888, p.124-5, Act No. 69; *News and Courier*, 12/23/1888, p.1; *News and Courier*, 6/22/1889, p.8.
[56]John Carr, 12/30/94.
[57]Charleston County R.M.C., deed in book A34 p.215: Mary R. Taft to Joseph Williams President of the Mutual Improvement Society of St. Andrews Parish; book A31 p.250 to Charles Connick 2/4/1886; book R24 p.310 to Joseph B. Gates 6/5/1906.
[58]Leonard Higgins, interview by author, Maryville, SC, 9/20/94; John Carr, 12/30/94.
[59]Charleston County R.M.C., deed in book A34 p.173, 2/7/1890; Bright is not listed in the 1900 census.

Despite its obscurity, many of Maryville's residents are interested in the history of the town. Its importance as a black success story is emphasized by some who want their children to learn more about the positive aspects of the lives of their ancestors. The problem is that, not only are records scattered, but personal recollections can vary greatly. The town's foundation and early development are two generations back in collective memory, and only a few related government records are available from that period.

Complicating the story are the two contradictory version's of Maryville's foundation that are in print: one white and one black. One is the work of a white genealogical historian, Henry A. M. Smith, who in one sentence gives the widow of C.C. Bowen the credit, or rather the blame, for having the land "divided up and sold out to negroes."[60] The other published account is in the biography of Ernest Everett Just, a distinguished black biologist of the 1920s who was raised in Maryville. He had strong memories of his youth there, especially of his mother's importance in the community.[61] In letters to Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, Just described how his mother, Mary Mathews Just, "negotiated a solid investment" in one of the sought-after plots in the village in 1888, working in the phosphate mines nearby to support her sickly family. According to Just's biographer, whose only source for the legend is Just's letters to Rosenwald, "she became a strong community leader, canvassing the inhabitants, mostly the men, and persuading them to transform the settlement into a town. They called the town Maryville, after its prime mover."[62]

In Just's version of the story, the new town was a source of pride for its residents, but Mary Just wanted to go further. She organized a Sunday school, where for many years she fought the illiteracy prevalent on the surrounding sea islands. Since no church or schoolhouse had yet been built, she held classes in her house during every spare moment

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[60]H. A. M. Smith, 219.

[61] The NAACP awarded Just the first Spingarn medal in 1915, for service to the race by a person of "African descent and American citizenship."

[62]Kenneth R. Manning, *Black Apollo of Science: The Life of Ernest Everett Just* (New York, Oxford U. Press., 1983), 15.

she had from the phosphate mines. Mary also taught school when the family was in Charleston during the summer, and on Saturdays she taught dress- and hat-making to women. She felt that such skills were "as crucial as the ability to read and write."[63]

This practical bent of mind also showed in Mary Just's business ventures. "Always quick to spot a new money venture, she pushed the local farmers into large-scale curing of moss fiber for mattresses . . . The farmers did not know how to make the most of the situation, so Mary held meetings to show them the advantage of working cooperatively to maximize profits." Seeing that Maryville lacked a school, Mary built her own. She sold her property to found the Frederick Deming, Jr. Industrial School, "the first industrial school for Negroes in the state of South Carolina."[64] She had to quit her job in the phosphate fields in order to run the school, but had the consolation of organizing the town's first church in the school building. She conducted services every Sunday, "not as an ordained minister but as a lay leader with a calling."[65]

Evidently there were few things that Mary Just could not or did not do. This account given by her devoted and neurotic son may be somewhat exaggerated, but there is almost certainly some grain of truth in it, and it serves well to offset the story that the entire town was the idea and accomplishment of a single white woman. Mary Taft may have imported a mayor and laid out the streets, but it certainly was left to the black citizens of the town to run the schools, churches, lodges, and improvement societies. In 1888, Taft sold a lot at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Battery Avenue to Joseph Williams, President of the Mutual Improvement Society of St. Andrews Parish. In 1904, the Maryville Enterprise Association bought the lot on the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Main, right in the center of town. The Maryville Enterprise Association, like many other clubs and organizations, has passed out of memory, but the Mutual Improvement Society was one of Maryville's most important institutions right up through

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[63]Manning, 17.
[64]E. E. Just to Julius Rosenwald, 3/10/29, Julius Rosenwald Papers, U. of Chicago.
[65]Manning, 17, 18, 19.

the 1930s. Evidently modeled along the lines of Charleston's traditional African-American burial societies, the Mutual Improvement Society collected relatively high dues and served in part as an insurance company; members would sit with each other when they were sick, and contribute toward the costs of medical care and funerals.[66] The Society also built a hall, Mutual Hall, which they used for meetings to discuss town politics, as well as for social occasions.

Not everyone in Maryville could afford to belong to the Mutual Improvement Society; in fact its founder and many other of Maryville's prominent citizens belonged to a class of light-skinned descendants of free blacks who dominated business in Charleston's black community.[67] But most of Maryville's residents had at least the capital necessary to make a payment on their lot and build a house, and so for the most part they were probably better off than the average black citizens of South Carolina.

At the town's inception in the 1880s and 90s Maryville's population worked mostly in farm-related labor, with a significant percentage employed in the phosphate rock industry. South Carolina based much of its hope for its role in the industrial New South on the phosphate boom of the late-nineteenth century. By 1920, extraction in Florida and other parts of the country had outstripped the less accessible resources of South Carolina, but until then phosphate extraction and fertilizer production was the main non-agricultural employer and money-maker in the coastal part of the state. Heavy manual labor was required to clear the topsoil and then to break up and remove the phosphate rock underneath. Some phosphate beds were uncovered by the action of river water, and the work there was evidently unique in the annals of American labor.[68]

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[66]Clemon Richardson, 10/30/95.

[67]The Williams, Carr, Seabrook, Bradley, and Ford families are listed in the 1920 census as mulatto. The Seabrook family traces its roots back through Amerinthia, who was the daughter of a plantation owner's son, and her husband William (Israel) Seabrook, a man of partly Jewish descent who farmed cotton in St. Andrews Parish before the Civil War, and afterwards owned a fleet of fishing "smacks." Mary Williams Stewart, "A Historical Account of the Seabrook Family," Seabrook family papers, Avery Institute.

[68]Francis S. Holmes, *Phosphate Rocks of South Carolina* (Charleston: Holmes' Book House, 1870), 83; George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900* (Columbia: U.S.C. Press, 1952), 126, cites Willis in Census (1890) XIV, 682, and states, "expert divers operated in deep water and were able to bring to the surface by hand sizable rocks that would require several men to handle out of the water."

"Workmen in South Carolina waded into the rivers at shallow places or at low tide and pried lumps of phosphate rock loose from a 12- to 22-inch stratum with crowbars, picks, and oyster tongs. These lumps were loaded largely by hand upon barges for transport to the washer. In many instances miners worked in deeper water and recovered lumps of phosphate rock by diving."[69] Such work did demand a higher wage than farm labor, perhaps making it attractive as a temporary measure; laborers made as much as $1.75 or 2.00 per day, while divers earned $18.00 a week, as opposed to two to three dollars a week for farm work.[70]

Although many Maryville residents worked in the phosphate industry, most chose to earn the going rate simply as farm laborers, or to farm for themselves. St. Andrews Parish was dominated by crops like cabbage and potatoes, but the large farmers, like J. M. Harrison, a white man who farmed most of the land surrounding Maryville, also experimented with growing such crops as tea and gladiolas.[71] The smaller-scale truck farmers in Maryville grew a wide variety of crops, including corn, beans, turnips (both yellow rutabagas and "nasty tasting white"), and strawberries.[72] Before the construction of the concrete Ashley River bridge in the 1920s, the produce was shipped into the market in Charleston from the landing at the end of Sycamore Avenue on Old Town Creek.

Old Town Creek was so called because on the other side was the site of the first Charles Town settlement of 1670. The land on which Maryville was laid out had served as that colony's experimental plantation.[73] On the high ground near the Ashley River, which became the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Main Street in Maryville, stood

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[69]A. Porter Haskell, *Technology, Employment, and Output per Man in Phosphate-Rock Mining, 1880-1937* (Philadelphia: WPA, 1938), 16. Diving was phased out during the 1880's by the use of steam dredges. Haskell reports that three "professional ditch diggers" from Ireland quit working for one company after three days, saying, "Faith, and the bloody holes broke our backs entirely, and we can't stand that" (75).
[70]George Alfred Devlin, *South Carolina and Black Migration 1865-1940: In Search of the Promised Land* (New York: Garland, 1989), 78; Jennie Haskell, "A Visit to the Phosphate Fields and Hills," *Harper's*, ca. 1885, p.412 ; Tindall, *S.C. Negroes*, 98, 127; John Carr, 10/28/95.
[71]*News and Courier*, 12/13/25, p.14; Leroy Gethers, 10/23/95; John Carr, 10/27/95.
[72]John Carr, 10/27/95.
[73]H. A. M. Smith, 212.

Governor Joseph West's palisaded house during the early 1670s, before Charles Town moved across the river to its present site on the peninsula. Fifth Avenue in fact seems to follow the broadly curving route of the original road to the palisade, thus qualifying as one of the oldest streets in the state.[74] West, South Carolina's second governor, was instructed by the Lords Proprietors in England to obtain "Cotton seed, Indigo Seed, Ginger Roots, w^{ch} roots you are to carry planted in a tubb of earth, y^{t} they may not dye before yo^{r} arrivall at Port-Royall; alsoe you may in another tubb carry some Canes planted for a tryall--alsoe of y^{e} several sorts of vines of that Island [Barbados] & some Ollive sets."[75] He was ordered to clear land upon arrival for the experimental plantings and also for the necessary planting of "Indian Corne, Beanes, Pease, Turnipps, Caretts, & Potatoes for Provisions."[76] The land where West established his plantation in 1670, and where his and his servants' houses stood, was known as Governor's Point until it became part of Hillsboro plantation. Indigo, eventually a successful experiment, still sprouts as a weed in some Maryville yards.[77]

In the 1920s, most Maryville residents tended a garden on their property, and although some still do today, the settlement has become much more thickly settled, with about five times as many people now living in the same area.[78] In 1920 the Federal Census reported that Maryville's population was 505, of which one was white, two were Chinese (all three in the same household) and 502 were black or mulatto. The same year, thirty percent of the employed people in Maryville were listed by the census enumerator as farm laborers, while seventeen per cent were farmers. The line between the two occupations seems to have been vague. Farm laborers included some children of farmers, and people like Oscar Gethers, who worked for a neighboring white farmer, but also

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[74]Lucia Jaycocks, "The Lords Proprietors Plantation and Palisaded Dwelling Compound, 1670-1675." (Charles Towne Landing: S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Feb. 23, 1973).
[75]H. A. M. Smith, 209.
[76]H. A. M. Smith, 210.
[77]John Carr, 12/30/94.
[78]Population Schedules, Chas. Co. ED 92, sheets 1A-4A; Charleston Co. Tax Maps; comparison of number of households 1920 (141) with houses 1967 (ca. 680).

rented land and sold the produce himself.[79] Farmers included mostly men who farmed their own land, like Mayor Robert Moultrie, as well as a few like Moultrie's neighbor, Peter Edwards, who rented the land he farmed.[80] With about half its labor employed in agriculture, Maryville was more of a country town than a suburban community. By way of comparison, only 2% of Lincolnville's workers were listed as farmers, and 8% as farm laborers.[81] Although it was separately incorporated, Lincolnville also served as a suburb of its neighbor, Summerville.[82] Many of its residents commuted by railroad to work in the stores and industries of Summerville and Charleston. Maryville was relatively more self-contained, despite its proximity to Charleston.

Just outside of Maryville in St. Andrews Parish, 81% of the black workers were "farm hands," while less than one per cent was listed as a farmer.[83] Farm labor itself was not automatically an undesirable occupation, but the fact that it usually did not pay enough to support a family is indicated by the tendency for a head of household employed in farm labor to be accompanied in the work by other members of his or her family. The better economic conditions in Maryville are indicated by a trend in the census data indicating that more wives in the town than out were listed as having no occupation.[84] In Maryville in 1900, the ratio of wives (and parents) without jobs to the total working population was more than twice that in the surrounding area, while in Lincolnville it was even higher.[85] In Maryville these were often the wives of farmers, who probably contributed to the work, but would not have designated themselves as farm laborers.

One of the wives in Maryville who did list an occupation in 1920 was Mary Carr, dressmaker. Six years later, she would abandon that line of work to become a licensed

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[79]Leroy Gethers, 10/23/95, 10/27/95; Population Schedules 1920, ED 92, sheet 1A.
[80]Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 92, sheet 1B.
[81]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 23.
[82]*Post and Courier*, 2/6/94, p.1-A.
[83]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 126, sheets 2A-4B.
[84]This index may seem sexist and outdated. However, it is something that really came out of the numbers, and evidently does indicate general economic status in the absence of direct data.
[85]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 127 (Maryville 0.26), 126 (St. Andrews 0.1), Berkeley Co. ED 23 (Lincolnville 0.6).

midwife. As such, it was her job not only to deliver the babies of Maryville, but also to record births and deaths. She charged ten dollars for each delivery, payable in fifty cent weekly installments. Her son, John Carr, knew that it was this money that kept him in school at the Avery Institute in Charleston, after which he went to college at Hampton. According to Carr, everyone else in Maryville knew this too, and they were proud to think that their money was sending him to school.[86] Before going into the city to school, John Carr attended the Deming school for a few years, where he remembers that one of the schoolyard taunts was to shout that so-and-so's daddy worked at the Ashy-poo mill.[87]

With the construction of the Ashepoo (the name of a river), Maybank, and Ashley Phosphate "mills" within walking distance, the percentage of phosphate industry workers in Maryville rose from 1.5% to 20% between 1900 and 1920, making phosphate the second largest employer in town.[88] Mechanized digging had moved the bulk of the labor from the pits to the wash houses and shipping depots, where the rock had to be rinsed, scrubbed, and then kiln-dried before shipping. One man whose father worked in phosphate recalled that "there was a lot of money in that industry. A lot of work too, a lot of work."[89] Outside the town of Maryville, in St. Andrews Parish, the number of phosphate workers was even higher.[90] Some parts of the county were evidently phosphate mine camps or villages, with the census enumeration districts broken down into divisions like Bulow Mine Co., or Charleston Mine Co. (containing several smaller groupings, including "pine land" and "Lambs"), where nearly every worker was renting a house and employed in "rock mine labor."[91] No one in Maryville, however, actually mined rock in 1920; the mills were closer and conditions there were less harsh.

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[86]John Carr, 10/28/95.
[87]John Carr, 10/11/95.
[88]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 127; 1920, Chas. Co. ED 92; John Carr, 10/11/95.
[89]Richmond Bowens, 10/25/95.
[90]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 126, about nine percent in a section not near a mill or mine.
[91]Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 88.

Some residents of the town had other jobs connected with the industry, like phosphate engineer and phosphate fireman.[92] They were part of a group of Maryville citizens who worked in trades which afforded more flexibility and income. In all, 25% of those employed in Maryville worked in a trade or in a railroad-affiliated job. One was Mayor Thomas Carr, who worked as a carpenter; Amos Nelson and David Bright were fishermen operating their own boats.[93] Between 1900 and 1910 the percentage of those employed in non-railroad trades stayed about constant, at 18-19%, but the variety of those trades dropped from 33 to 15 fields. One reason is that, for some reason, municipal jobs, like Chief Marshal, Constable, and Intendant (mayor), were listed in 1900, but not 1920. In addition, there seems to have been a consolidation of employment into fields like bricklaying and carpentry, and a loss of the few and far-between jobs like cotton press fireman, sailor, and butler. Domestic work increased during this period, with the number of laundresses going up from two to nine, but the proportion of domestic workers was still quite low.[94] As transportation into Charleston improved, and as the city itself overflowed into the area surrounding Maryville, this rate evidently continued to climb, and middle-aged residents of Maryville remember domestic work as a major source of employment.[95] The literacy rate among Maryville heads of household in 1900 was 54%, much higher than the 9% in the surrounding countryside, and well beyond the South Carolina black literacy rate of 47%.[96]

What distinguished Maryville as a town, though, was not so much the education and occupations of its citizens as their relationship to the land on which they lived. In the town, 30% of the heads of household owned their house, plus 16% who owned farms, while in the surrounding parish almost no (1%) black residents owned their house, but

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[92]Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 92 sheet 4B; 1900, ED 127 sheet 18A.
[93]Population Schedules 1920, ED 92. Carr was mayor around 1930-1935. He was listed in the census as a farmer.
[94]Population Schedules 1920, Chas. Co. ED 92; 1900, Orange Co. FL, ED 117. 7.6% in Maryville, 21% in Eatonville, Florida.
[95]Frank Brown, 10/23/95.
[96]Henry Allen Bullock, *Negro Education in the South, From 1619 to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1967), 172; U. S. Census 1900, Vol..II, p.cv

97% rented from a white landowner.[97] This was the general rule in the South, and indeed the nation. Whites did not like to sell land to black buyers, and they felt that it was an achievement to obtain land that had fallen out of black hands through tax default.[98] It was because Mary Taft had opened up her lands for sale to blacks that Maryville was able to provide a haven from the solid resistance to black independence. At the time of Mary's death in 1927, Maryville seemed to have achieved all of its promise.[99] People had more land, money, education, and political independence there than they did elsewhere. The question was how long it would last.

Clearly, most white residents of the area, even if they behaved with civility, were uncomfortable with the idea of an all-black town.[100] In fact, in South Carolina's historiography, the history of Maryville has been considered, if at all, largely as the story of the white people who owned the land before it became a black town. A 1915 account goes on for four pages covering 200 years of deed transfers, and concludes, "the private plantation of the Lords Proprietors has thus become the site of a negro settlement or village generally now called 'Maryville.'"[101] A 1973 study proposed placing a state park in the middle of Maryville in order to attract tourists and commemorate the site of Governor West's house.[102] Maryville residents are aware of the historical value of their land, but its primary importance for them is as a black village, not as a monument to colonial settlement.[103]

The residents of Maryville in the 1920s, from the old and disturbed Edgefield freedman, William Mims, to the tennis-playing weekenders at the Seabrook homestead, all knew that Maryville was a valuable place-- a place to be protected and invested in.[104]

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[97]Population Schedules 1900, Chas. Co. ED 126.
[98]Woodson, *Negro Migration*, 130.
[99]Will of Mary (Taft) Geddings and related papers. Register of Wills, Washington, D. C.
[100]John Carr, 10/28/95.
[101]H. A. M. Smith, 219.
[102]Jaycocks, *Lord's Proprietors Plantation.*
[103]I use the term village mostly to emphasize the smallness of a settlement, not necessarily as opposed to an incorporated town.
[104]*News and Courier*, 12/25/31; Charleston County R.M.C., deeds, transfers, and mortgages involving the Invincible Association.

The one did odd jobs for the town and hoarded his money, the others formed real estate investment associations. Those in between joined improvement societies, churches, and the police force, and offered their services to the town government. They were proud to be part of the town, and they knew that only a few others, like Lincolnville, offered such opportunities for black self-government and self-determination.[105] In the coming decade of the 1930s, that opportunity would be challenged; while Lincolnville would survive, Maryville's town charter would be taken away, and its citizens would say a sad thank you to their last mayor.

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[105]Frank Brown, 10/25/95; Clemon Richardson, 10/3/95.

Chapter Two

Black Towns in America: Models for Maryville?

Maryville and Lincolnville were only two of at least seventy-five black towns in the United States during the 1920s.[106] Often they were very small or not officially incorporated, but they all provided a local realm of self-government. Black towns have their origins in a wide variety of fluctuating conditions that emerged from Emancipation, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Redemption. First of all, it was inevitable that members of a large group of people with a common history and culture-- simultaneously freed from bondage and allowed to move and settle wherever they could-- would end up living together. Aside from staying on the plantation to work for wages, other viable options were to move to an established city or town, which many blacks did, or to form one of their own. Many of these towns were short-lived, and many others might barely qualify as villages, but the idea was always the same-- a sphere of authority, however small, which was all-black. These independent communities pop up consistently in the literature on freedmen, being of interest because they deviated from both the isolated plantation lifestyle and the segregated or subservient urban condition typically associated with American blacks.[107]

The primary goal of freedmen in the South was to obtain land. Many felt that freedom would be empty without land to farm and build a house on. Lacking that security, according to one account, "de ole masses can hire us or starve us, as dey please."[108] An agent of northern cotton manufacturers reported in 1865, "the sole ambition of the freedman at the present time appears to be to become the owner of a little

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[106]Woodson, *Rural Negro*, 115-124.

[107]These two poles have remained constant models of black life since before the Civil War. Reconstruction observers commented on the plantations and the cities, but treated black towns as a novelty (e.g., Whitelaw Reid, 127-129).

[108]Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), quoting Whitelaw Reid, 104.

piece of land, there to erect a humble home, and to dwell in peace and security at his own free will and pleasure."[109] The redistribution of land to blacks was also the goal of many Northerners, including both idealistic Radical Republican legislators and practical-minded generals. During the Civil War, the most famous experiment with black land ownership was at Port Royal, South Carolina. There the freed slaves were allotted parcels from the occupied plantations, which they farmed successfully, sending their children to school, and participating in community life and politics.[110] The parcels were all farm-sized, and no black town as such developed at Port Royal. Nearby, however, on Hilton Head Island, a town called Mitchelville grew to as many as 3,000 inhabitants by 1864, and elected a Georgia minister, Abram Murchison, as its mayor.[111]

Other sea islands also supported "self-governing communities from which all whites were excluded."[112] On Skidaway Island near Savannah, a colony of more than a thousand freedmen laid out a village and established a government "for the maintenance of order and the settlement of all difficulties," electing a governor, a sheriff, and three inspectors.[113] Other freedmens' villages and contraband camps flourished throughout the South. Many, like Saxtonville and Mitchelville on Hilton Head, and James City in North Carolina, were named for the white military officers in charge. But all were under black self-government, and were described by white observers as centers of hopeful industry, with streets laid out, land cleared, and houses and churches built.[114] General William T. Sherman, at the end of his March to the Sea, found that there were too many freed slaves following his army, and saw that their numbers would only increase as he marched up the coast. In a meeting with local black leaders in Savannah, one man told Sherman that, given a choice between living among whites or separately, blacks "would prefer to live by

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[109]Foner, 109, quoting A. Warren Kelsey correspondence.
[110]Martin Abbott, *The Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, 1865-1872* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Press, 1967), 5-8. See also Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1964).
[111]Magdol, 103.
[112]Magdol, 103, quoting Trowbridge, *The South*.
[113]Magdol, 105.
[114]Magdol, 93, 94, 96.

ourselves, for there is a prejudice against us in the South that will take years to get over."[115] Sherman's consequent Field Order Number 15 set aside a thirty-mile wide strip of coastline between Charleston and Savannah for black settlers. Each was to have forty acres and perhaps the loan of a mule.[116] Other army officers in coastal Virginia and North Carolina also set aside land for the crowds of "contrabands" who followed Union forces.[117]

In March of 1865, following their examples, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, providing that each freed man be given not more than forty acres of land.[118] But by the end of 1865, President Johnson's reconciliatory policies had required abandoned and confiscated property under the jurisdiction of the Freedmen's Bureau to be restored to Confederate owners, and land was increasingly difficult to get and to keep. Freedmen's Bureau agents, supported by soldiers, had to force blacks who had set up their own governments and settled on abandoned land to sign labor contracts with returning landlords.[119] Stubbornly radical Bureau agents were removed from office, while organized and armed resistance on the part of blacks, especially in the "Sherman Land" district, held off returning landowners only temporarily.[120] Blacks were forced back onto plantations by a Freedmen's Bureau whose priority had become not to bring them into full enjoyment of the rights of American citizens, but to get them back to work on the cotton crop.

With the arrival of Radical Reconstruction in 1868, however, hope was offered anew to blacks who needed land. The South Carolina Constitution of 1868 mandated the formation of a commission to purchase land for resale to freedmen on generous terms.

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[115]Foner, 70.
[116]Foner, 70.
[117]Joe A. Mobley, *James City: A Black Community in North Carolina 1863-1900*, Research Reports from the Division of Archives and History, No. 1. (Raleigh, NC: Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981), 21-25; Foner, 54n, 57.
[118]William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge: L.S.U. Press, 1991), 11.
[119]Foner, 162.
[120]Foner, 162, 163

The South Carolina Land Commission, the only one of its kind in any state, was established by the state legislature the next year. The Land Commission had settled several "tracts" by the time its functional life was over in 1890. Some of these, like Promised Land in Abbeville County, survived as cohesive black communities, but many farmers lost their land either when the commission was taken over by the Democrats or later as constant pressure deprived blacks of their property.[121] During the 1890s, the Land Commission even sold land in large tracts to white planters. A total 68,355 acres were sold to whites, while only 44,579 acres of the 114,436 that it bought were sold to blacks.[122] Only 70,000 of South Carolina's 600,000 black citizens, at the most, held Land Commission land at some point during its twenty years of operation.[123] This was a far cry form the dreams of Martin Delany and Franklin Moses Jr. of bringing all the freedmen onto solid footing by selling them land and houses.

For the most part, black South Carolinians were on their own in their quest for an independent community. After Reconstruction, the best chance at cheap land for all comers was through railroad development. Railroads were the darlings of the new industrial South, and they were granted land and credit by state governments at minimal rates.[124] The railroads then turned around and sold land along the lines in order to create and maintain demand for rail services. Land agents founded and promoted hundreds of towns in the South and West, and blacks were not excluded from the effort. After all, they paid as much for a ticket as white people did. It was as an agent for the Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railroad that black businessman Isaiah Montgomery reorganized the freedmen's village of Davis Bend, Mississippi into the town of Mound Bayou. It became the most prosperous black town in America, boasting its own bank and cottonseed mill, and boosted even by Booker T. Washington.[125] Likewise, Richard H. Cain-- a black

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[121] Carol K. Rothrock Bleser, *The Promised Land: The History of the South Carolina Land Commission 1869-1890* (Columbia: U.S.C. Press, 1969), 133.
[122] Bleser, 144.
[123] Bleser, 158.
[124] Simkins and Woody, 188.
[125] Booker T. Washington, "A Town Owned by Negroes," *World's Work* 14 (July 1907), 9128.

Congressman from South Carolina, a leader in the African colonization movement both before and after the Civil War, and a supporter of the South Carolina Land Commission--founded the town of Lincolnville, north of Charleston, along the South Carolina Railroad line.[126] Maryville was not planned around a railroad, but it was lucky enough to have one cut right through the middle of town in 1917.[127] The train not only provided immediate connections with distant points, but its bridge made a convenient shortcut into the city. Some residents walked across it to get to work at the phosphate mill, to which they had previously rowed a boat across the river.[128] The railroads, in Maryville and elsewhere, provided links with the outside world, and some support for the economic life of the town.

During the 1880s the overriding concern of southern blacks was emigration. Thousands joined the flow to the West to escape white oppression and to get a little land to call their own. One result was the rise of a sort of rim of black towns in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Oklahoma, according to Carter Woodson's tally in 1930, contained more black towns than any other state.[129] After Oklahoma was opened to settlement in 1889, black immigrants began to pour in, attracted by the work of promoters, and settling in towns which had been started by the freed slaves of the Creek Indians.[130] One promoter, Edward McCabe, pushed for the formation of Oklahoma as an all-black state, but as white settlers came even faster than blacks, Oklahoma was soon as rent by racial problems as anyplace else in the nation.[131]

Back in the Southeast, whites were alarmed at the rate at which black workers were leaving the region. The most concerted and dramatic instance was the Edgefield, South Carolina exodus of 1881 and 1882. The Edgefield Democrats' adoption of the

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[126]Simkins and Woody, 199.
[127]Charleston County R.M.C., McCrady Plat Collection, Book 4, p.16,17, Seaboard Air Line Right of Way; Wilbur Smith Associates, *Final Report of Potential Commuter Rail Services in the Charleston Urban Area* (Charleston, Wilbur Smith, 1990) 2-5.
[128]John Carr, 12/30/94, 10/11/95.
[129]Woodson, *Rural Negro*, 119, counted 14 black towns in OK.
[130]Thomas W. Pew, Jr., "Boley Oklahoma: Trial in American Apartheid," *American West* 17, 16-17.
[131]Cohen, 254-5.

shotgun policy convinced blacks there that they had no more to hope for in South Carolina, and in the final week of 1881 about 5,000, representing one sixth of the county's black population, left for Arkansas.[132] The Exodus to Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, and Texas continued from other parts of the South through the 1880s. With the loss of the hope that Reconstruction had offered, interest even revived in emigration to Africa, but a disastrous effort based in Charleston led prospective colonists to focus instead on their own country.[133] The opportunities here were frighteningly limited, as Southern whites refused to sell land to blacks, and moving west meant taking severe financial risks for those who had any money to risk.[134] In 1880, South Carolina had its highest ever proportion of black population, 60.7%, but through fraud and intimidation the white redeemers had regained control of the state government.[135] Though their policies were violent and racist, the worst was yet to come. In 1892, Governor Tillman declared, "Governor as I am, I'd lead a mob to lynch a man who had ravished a white woman."[136] In 1898 a black man was killed, his house burned, and his family all shot and wounded because he had been appointed postmaster in a small town in Williamsburg county.[137] All-black towns offered a limited refuge from the racial war that ravaged the state and region.

One of the foremost figures who saw the black town as a racial refuge was Zora Neale Hurston, who was born and raised in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida. The action in her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is based in a black town modeled on Eatonville. Hurston's town was a crucial part of her life; she begins her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, with a discussion not of her parents or her schooling, but with the early history of her birthplace.

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[132]Tindall, 170.
[133]Cohen, 159; Devlin, 99.
[134]Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1918), 146, 172. Moving north at this time was not as attractive as moving west because opportunities for work simply did not exist during the influx of European immigrants, and land there was expensive.
[135]Devlin, 104.
[136]Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes*, 251.
[137]Tindall, South *Carolina Negroes*, 255.

Eatonville, according to Hurston, had its beginnings in a resort town, Maitland, settled by Northerners after the Civil War. The black population of the town, employed in the labor of clearing and building, was allowed to vote in the first election, and they put into office a black mayor and town marshal along with the white town council. There was no real problem with this arrangement, but the ambitious Marshal Joe Clarke's imagination was fired. "Why not a Negro town? ... Joe Clarke had plenty of confidence in himself to do the job, but few others could conceive of it."[138] Clarke talked to the leading citizens of Maitland, including Captain Eaton, who agreed to give land, buildings, and encouragement for the foundation of a black town a mile away. "So on August 18, 1886, the Negro town, called Eatonville, after Captain Eaton, received its charter of incorporation from the state capital at Tallahassee, and made history by becoming the first of its kind in America, and perhaps in the world."[139]

Hurston wrote that, though Eatonville had two churches and a school, "Joe Clarke's store was the heart and spring of the town. Men sat around the store on boxes and benches and passed this world and the next one through their mouths."[140] A fascination with the porch stories she overheard, and the solid self-confidence that Hurston developed in a town relatively isolated from white hostility, formed her into the passionate student and writer that she would become. She invoked the freedom of thought that a black town encouraged on the first page of her greatest novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. "These sitters had been tongueless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things."[141]

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[138]Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, in *Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 565.
[139]Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 1995, 565.
[140]Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 1995, 599.
[141]Zora Neale Hurston, Their *Eyes Were Watching God*, with a Foreword by Mary Helen Washington (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 1-2.

In the novel, an ambitious young man named Joe Starks heads for South Florida from Atlanta with money in his pocket, hearing the irresistible rumor of an all-black town. He invigorates the sleepy village, builds a store, establishes a post office, and becomes mayor. The stories told on the porch of Starks' store play a central role in the first half of the novel, just as they did in Hurston's youth. It is the exchange of information and opinion in this porch talking that Hurston sees as the central governing institution of the town. No one could possibly get away with anything in a town where all deeds, even some that never happened, are discussed at length among the citizens, each of whom, even if he or she lacks the drive of the mayor, is conscious of the distinction of living in a black town.

What is most clear about Hurston's childhood in Eatonville is that she felt comfortable there; later in life she cherished it as a place where the rich African-American culture could be expressed to its fullest.[142] She spent much of her professional life researching Negro culture, in Harlem with Franz Boas, in Florida with the Federal Writers' Project, and in the Caribbean on a Guggenheim fellowship.[143] Describing and preserving that culture was important to her, and she returned to her birthplace, "the crib of negroism," as her most valuable source of folklore.[144]

It was for these chances at the blooming of both personal and cultural life that black people settled and promoted their own towns after the Civil War. The feeling of wholeness that came from living in a full world of black endeavor gave confidence and some comfort to residents of these towns. Mayor Ben Green of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, observed, "Everything here was Negro, from the symbols of law and authority and the man who owned the bank down to the fellow who drove the road scraper. That gave us kids a sense of security and power and pride that colored kids don't

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[142] Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 1995, 571; Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression", in *Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings*, (New York: Library of America, 1995), 830-854.
[143] Hurston, *Their Eyes*, 1990, 201-207.
[144] Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*, in *Folklore, Memoirs, and Other Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 9-12.

get anywhere else."[145] Mound Bayou operated on a grander scale than any other black town; most of them were more like their white or mixed counterparts of fewer than 1,000 people. The most powerful and respected businessman was the store owner, and he often also served as the mayor if the town was incorporated. In some black towns, including Maryville and Princeville, North Carolina, stores were owned by white men who either lived elsewhere or composed most of a small white population in the town.[146] In Maryville in 1900, according to the census, the single white resident of the town, Frederick Wigger from Germany, owned the grocery store.[147] By 1925, there were at least five stores in the town, three of which were owned by Germans (including Wigger), one by Robert Miller, a Chinese-American, and one by a black resident of the town, Middleton Grant.[148]

To say that black towns provided an all-black sphere of authority is not to say that this sphere itself was ever complete. Very few residents really lived in a 100% black world even at a completely local level. Whites often owned stores in the town or held the mortgages on much of the land, and citizens of black towns often worked outside the town for white people. Racial conflict was therefore inevitable. Though more infrequent because of isolation, white antipathy may have been more violently directed against black towns because of their affront to white supremacy. A comparison of Eatonville with another Florida town, Rosewood, demonstrates the polar extremes of racial peace and radical persecution affecting black towns.

Eatonville, for Hurston, provided a crucial psychological refuge from the pressures of white society. She recalled a peaceful childhood there, and a happy personal and civic relationship with nearby whites.[149] Eatonville is still a cohesive black town near

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[145]Janet Sharp Hermann, *The Pursuit of a Dream* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1981), 243, quoting J. Saunders Redding, *No Day of Triumph* (New York: Harper, 1942), 300.
[146]Joe A. Mobley, "In the Shadow of White Society: Princeville, a Black Town in North Carolina, 1865-1915," *North Carolina Historical Review* 63, 344; Woodson, *Rural Negro*, 113.
[147]Population Schedules 1900, Charleston Co. ED 127 sheet 15B line 94.
[148]John Carr, 4/10/95.
[149]Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, 585-589.

Orlando. Rosewood, Florida, on the other hand, no longer exists; all of its citizens were driven out during a mass lynching in 1923.[150]

Rosewood was not founded as a black town; it was a lumber boom town from which most of the whites moved away in the early 1900s, leaving the black residents to themselves.[151] On January 1, 1923, residents of the town were accused of helping a suspected black rapist to escape, and one was killed for not telling where the suspect was.[152] Another, one of the town's leading citizens, defended his home and family for a night and half a day, killing two white men who entered his house. Most citizens of the town fled into the woods and then to Gainesville on a special train arranged by sympathetic railroad workers. The town itself was burned and its people never returned, abandoning the land they had owned and their hopes for a secure life in a black community.[153]

Rosewood survivors felt that they had lost something else just as precious as property and lives in the violence of January 1923. Many felt a loss of dignity and confidence, as they were reduced to begging, and to seeking menial jobs in new places.[154] Legends arose around the final events in the town, such as the story that Sylvester Carrier, the man who shot two members of the mob, had actually survived, and sent his family Christmas cards for years after. The town itself and its stature in the black community grew in communal memory. One descendant of Rosewood survivors claimed, "Rosewood was nicknamed the Black Mecca... Rosewood was to the Southeast and especially Florida, what Atlanta is today."[155] The extent of this exaggeration might indicate the giant shadow that an all-black town could cast on the mental landscape of the rural South.

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[150]John Taylor, "The Rosewood Massacre" *Esquire*, July 1994, 54. Rosewood became famous in 1994, when the Florida legislature passed a bill granting reparations of $150,000 for each Rosewood survivor, and establishing a scholarship fund for their children.
[151]Taylor, 48.
[152]Evidently, the real culprit was white, and Rosewood residents helped him escape out of solidarity with a fellow Mason (Taylor, 50).
[153]Taylor, 47, 50-53.
[154]Taylor, 47.
[155]Taylor, 54.

The ideological importance of black towns sprang from their existence as symbols of the ability of black people to exercise some self-determination in a world which sought to control them in every single way. One Maryville resident recently commented that it was important to let young people know the history of Maryville so that they would have pride in the self-reliance of a people, disadvantaged by a history of slavery, who built up a working town for themselves after the Civil War.[156] Such a pride in race accomplishments does not necessarily entail racial separatism, as some historians of black towns imply. The attitudes governing black towns of course varied widely. Some militantly excluded all whites; others, like Rosewood, emerged almost accidentally as all-black communities.[157] But most ideological frameworks seem too harsh to explain the attitude that animated black towns. "Segregation," "apartheid," "black nationalism," and even "separatism" seem to be strong words to describe towns where, usually, no one was forcefully excluded-- where residents sought simply to escape some of the oppressive social and economic effects of the American caste system.

Even black town founders, like Isaiah Montgomery of Mound Bayou and Edward McCabe of Liberty, Oklahoma, put economic considerations ahead of racial ones by trying to attract blacks with ready capital and to exclude the destitute who were seeking a refuge. McCabe's newspaper carried a regular column entitled, "Come Prepared or Not at All," and in 1891, on the topic of state aid to poor black settlers, commented that it was "a mistake for any but self-supporting people to come."[158] Most of those who did come to black towns would probably just as soon have bought land on the same terms anywhere else if they could get it. The current residents of Maryville do not at all see themselves or their predecessors as separatist; in fact they are proud of their town's history because it

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[156]Leonard Higgins, 9/20/94.

[157]Magdol, 104; according to a Georgia judge testifying to a Congressional Committee in 1871, Tunis Campbell's St. Catherine's Island community passed a law excluding whites from the island. Crockett, 75; Taylor, 52.

[158]Kenneth Marvin Hamilton, *Black Towns and Profit: Promotion and Development in the Trans-Appalachian West, 1877-1915* (Chicago: U. of IL Press, 1991), 104.

shows their ability to work within the framework of the local political and social structure.[159]

Of course in a literal sense the residents of Maryville and other black towns lived more or less separate from whites. Even if they lived in Maryville because it was their only chance to buy land, their town served as a demonstration that black citizens need not remain dependent on whites. The same simple goals made black town founders and promoters extreme radicals in the context of their times. Martin Delany, hailed as "the first 'Black Nationalist'," did not found a black town, but he devoted his life to trying to establish the South Carolina freedmen on their own ground.[160]

As a Freedman's Bureau officer on Hilton Head Island, Delany defended the freedmen's rights to the Sherman land, and instituted among them a democratic police force, "only reporting such cases to Hd. Quarters of the District, as cannot or may not be settled among themselves, before the Head Man."[161] Delany clashed with "Squire Murchison" on the government of the town of Mitchelville during its deflation after the army moved out. By 1870, Delany was in Charleston calling for "philanthropic capitalists" to buy lands "which could be purchased at such a figure as to enable the purchaser to dispose of them to the freedmen at an average advance of fifty percent on the original purchase money."[162]

Reverend Richard H. Cain, also recognized as a founding father of black consciousness, had worked with Delany in 1861 in the African Civilization Society in New York.[163] Cain moved south after the war to found the first African Methodist Episcopal church in Charleston in 1867, and was elected to Congress in 1870. Cain and Delany together led the African colonization efforts of 1877. After Delany's death, Cain

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[159] Clemon Richardson, 10/30/95; Frank Brown, 11/2/95.
[160] Wilson Moses, 18; Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), ix.
[161] Ullman, 368, quoting Delany's August 1, 1886 report to the assistant commissioner.
[162] Ullman, 423, quoting Delany, letter to Sen. Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, ca. 1870.
[163] Ullman, 264. The Civilization Society was a black-run counterpart to the Colonization Society. Delany emphasized the mission of civilizing Africa.

continued to work for the advancement of blacks in the state, founding the town of Lincolnville during the 1880s.

In the 1890s, Edward McCabe linked the promotion of his black towns to efforts to make Oklahoma an all-black state. Some of the Oklahoma towns were perhaps more explicitly connected with black separatist sentiment, with residents who were "hellbent on keeping whites out."[164] Most black towns, especially in the Southeast, were founded more upon philanthropy, and operated with attitudes of openness and cooperation rather than true isolation.[165] They were communities that wanted to be full participants in the state and national scenes, not to shut themselves off. Although many blacks were pressured into their all-black towns by social and economic persecution, black towns did not function as half of the system of residential segregation. A black town was not a ghetto but "a beacon of hope and a place of refuge to beleaguered blacks in a senselessly hostile white world."[166]

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[164]Crockett, 47.

[165]Leonard Higgins, interview by author, 9/20/94, described the white families long resident in Maryville; Hurston, *Dust Tracks*, ch. 1.

[166]Hermann, 242.

Chapter Three

Maryville Under Pressure: The State Constitution and the Chain Store Tax

Maryville was a town completely at odds with the political ethos if its state. The idea that black people could govern themselves in a civilized way was ridiculed by white writers and politicians, and during Reconstruction the overwhelming desire of every "responsible white citizen" was to redeem the "Prostrate State" from "Negro rule."[167] After Redemption, the entire political system of the state became oriented toward keeping the majority black population politically powerless and economically dependent. In 1936, Maryville fell victim to these political pressures when its town charter was revoked by the state legislature. The questions foremost in the minds of Maryville's citizens were why their town was annulled, and how. How a town could cease to exist without the consent of its residents must be explained in part by examining the structure of state government. In short, the state always retained as much power over local units as possible; its power over towns was dramatically demonstrated during the early 1930s.

The effect of the state government on Maryville must begin to be traced from the Constitutional Convention of 1895, and then through the South Carolina State Legislature, a body that leaves a minimal record of its deliberations. The journal of the legislative sessions records only the motions made and the texts of bills and resolutions, while debate is noted simply as "debate," if at all. Even at such important gatherings of the lawmakers as constitutional conventions, members voted against any "official stenographic report of their proceedings."[168] The reasons for this become clear upon reading the motions made, laws

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[167]James S. Pike, *The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1874).

[168]Amasa Mason Eaton, *The Late Constitutional Convention and Constitution of South Carolina* (Providence, RI.: s.n., 1895), 203. The Constitution of 1895 provides that the houses of the Assembly keep a journal, but need not publish parts that "may require secrecy." Yeas and nays will be entered if several members demand it, dissenting opinions will be published upon request, and "the doors of each house shall be open, except on such occasions as in the opinion of the House may require secrecy." Art. III, Sec. 22-23.

passed, and the occasional newspaper reports of legislative debate. Discussion seems to have been generally narrow-minded and ill-informed, and the actions often unconstitutional or unethical. For example, by what reasoning might the 1895 Constitutional Convention have raised the legal age of sexual consent for girls from ten to fourteen after receiving a petition from the Women's Christian Temperance Union of the state, pleading that it be set at eighteen years?[169] By what train of debate was the Ku Klux Klan designated an "Eleemosynary Institution," and given the use of county-owned land?[170] We will never know, just as we will never know exactly why a law called the "Chain Store Tax Act" of 1930 was written in a way that would pull the rug out from under half the small towns in the state, including, indirectly, Maryville. But a look at the way the state government worked, as set up by the Constitution of 1895, will give us a clue.

The Constitutional Convention of 1895 was the culmination of an effort by populist forces to wrest control from the Conservative Democrats who had come to power at the head of the redeeming "Straightout" Democratic ticket in 1877. The election of 1876 was based largely on violence and fraud. The Democrats, united under General Wade Hampton, were organized statewide into mounted "Red Shirts" and local rifle clubs.[171] One rifle club member recalled informing a black man at a political meeting, "my orders are to stick right by you all day and if any trouble is started here to shoot you until you're dead, first thing, and I'm going to do it."[172] The leader of the Democratic effort in upstate Edgefield County, General Mart Gary, sketched out a campaign plan which included the item, "Every Democrat must feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one negro, by intimidation, purchase, keeping him away or as each individual may determine, how he may best

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[169]S. C. Constitutional Convention (1895), *Journal of the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895* (Columbia: C.A. Calvo, 1895), 163; Constitution of 1895, Art. II, Sec. 33.

[170]S.C. Statutes at Large, 1933, Act 605, p.1158.

[171]Alfred Williams, *Hampton and His Red Shirts: South Carolina's Deliverance in 1876* (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Cogswell, 1935), 268.

[172]Williams, 113; On September 6, 1876, 25 black and 4 white men were killed in a riot in Charleston, incited after speeches given by black Democrats. In October, the battle went the other way, when five whites and one black man died in shooting at a political meeting near Cainhoy, in Charleston County. Williams, 268.

accomplish it."[173] He advised against threatening a man if "the necessities of the times require that he should die. A dead Radical is very harmless."[174] On election day in Edgefield, Gary's armed men took over the polling places, and at the end of the day 9,374 votes had been cast (with a majority for Wade Hampton), in a county with a population of 7,122 adult males.[175]

The "redeemed" state continued to operate under the constitution of 1868, which allowed universal male suffrage, but the populist Democrats, led by Mart Gary and his follower Ben Tillman, soon broke with the Conservatives and demanded that the white farmers be given more power and the blacks even less. A resolution in every state legislative session after 1876 called for a new constitution to replace the one written by the Radical Republicans in 1868, but it was not until 1894, when "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman was elected senator after serving two terms as governor, that the populist Reformers controlled the two-thirds majority needed to call a convention.[176] Tillman exploited the fear of a future resurgence of black power to win a narrow popular margin in favor of a convention. Blacks were largely excluded from voting for convention delegates by registration laws and violent intimidation, but Beaufort County sent a black delegation of five, and one black delegate represented Georgetown County as part of a compromise coalition.[177] These are both coastal counties that had populations over 75% black at the time.[178]

The avowed purpose of the constitutional convention was black disfranchisement, but it also aimed to undermine the power of the "aristocratic oligarchy" against which Tillman and the Reform Democrats, also known as the Farmers' Association, had fought to come to power.[179] In fact, the disfranchisers feared as much the political ascendancy of the

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[173]Simkins and Woody, 566.
[174]Simkins and Woody, 567.
[175]Simkins and Woody, 515n.
[176]Francis Butler Simkins, *The Tillman Movement in South Carolina* (Durham: Duke U. Press, 1926), 14, 129-134.
[177]David Duncan Wallace, *The South Carolina Constitution of 1895*, Bulletin of the University of S.C. No. 197 (Columbia: U.S.C., 1927), 28-29.
[178]Woodson, *Negro Migration*, maps 164-165; in 1880 Beaufort was 92% black and Georgetown 82%.
[179]George Brown Tindall, "The Question of Race in the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895," *Journal of Negro History* 37, 277-303.

white low country planters backed by the manipulated black vote as that of blacks themselves. Tillman's argument for constitutional disfranchisement was an appeal to fear of the day when "white men of acknowledged character and decent reputation [not to mention "broken-down aristocrats"] are willing to use the Negro in politics with the hope of regaining lost supremacy."[180] Both of Tillman's gubernatorial opponents, in 1890 and 1892, openly appealed to black voters, and were endorsed by the Republican party in response to Tillman's zeal for a disfranchising constitution.[181] Tillman himself threatened, "any man who attempts to lead the negroes of Edgefield to vote the independent ticket runs a great personal risk."[182] Once in office he announced, "The triumph of Democracy and white supremacy over mongrelism and anarchy is complete."[183]

For Maryville, this meant that political participation would henceforth be restricted to the town itself, but they were more fortunate than 99.8% of the state's black population who did not enjoy even that. Under Tillman's direction, the Convention of 1895 produced a convoluted suffrage article based on the Mississippi Plan involving reading and understanding, payment of poll taxes long in advance of the election, and exclusion for minor crimes-- provisions which, in conjunction with the white primary and multiple ballot boxes, would effectively exclude blacks from state and national politics for seventy-five years. At the end of the convention, the leading delegates made speeches wishing each other Merry Christmas and congratulating themselves on subverting their differences to achieve a noble common goal, while the six black delegates walked out in disgust, having refused to sign the constitution.[184]

Despite the efforts of the black delegates, racist and partisan ideology had determined the debate and formulation of nearly every article in the constitution.[185] One of

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[180]Simkins, 205, 110.
[181]Simkins, 133.
[182]Simkins, 133.
[183]Simkins, 137.
[184]Convention Journal, 1895, B. R. Tillman, p.730; 727.
[185]Every one of the black delegates made a long and eloquent speech against the suffrage article. James Wigg said, "the doctrine so persistently taught that the interests of the Negro and Anglo-Saxon are so opposed as to be irreconcilable is a political subterfuge; a fallacy so glaring in its inception, so insulting to

the first concerns of the convention, for instance, was the procedure for establishing new counties. The object of the Tillmanites was to create more upstate counties in order to increase their power in the state senate over the black-majority lowcountry. The convention itself created a new county out of part of Ben Tillman's home county of Edgefield-- one of many instances in which the delegates overstepped their own authority by making specific laws more properly left to future legislatures.[186]

The rules for incorporating towns and modifying charters were other concerns of the 1895 convention. A measure was introduced providing that towns might form and amend their own charters "through a board of five freeholders elected for that purpose," without any interference from the state. This might have made it possible for black towns to spring up throughout the state anywhere that a group of black citizens could get hold of land. Perhaps for this reason, it was not reported by the Committee on Municipal Corporations and Police Regulations.[187] Previously, towns had been chartered by special act of the state legislature after petition from the inhabitants, but Article III, Section 34, Part III, enjoined the General Assembly from enacting any special or local laws "to incorporate cities, towns, or villages, or change, amend, or extend the charter thereof." Henceforward, this was to be the work of the Secretary of State, in accordance with general laws by which all towns of certain sizes would be governed.[188] If amending includes revoking, then technically the revocation of Maryville's charter was unconstitutional, but the "special laws" article was the most ignored and amended part of the constitution; the legislature in effect retained the power to do what it pleased.[189]

Existing cities and towns were instructed in the constitution to "reorganize under the general laws of the State."[190] Maryville complied with this stipulation in the summer of

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Providence, so contrary to reason and logic of history, that one can scarcely refrain from calling in question either the sanity of honesty of its advocates." Tindall, "Race," 290.

[186]S. C. Constitution of 1895, Article VI, Sec. 12; Eaton, 199, 208, 211.

[187]Eaton, 206.

[188]Code of South Carolina of 1902, Sec. 1935.

[189]Eaton, 205-206.

[190]Constitution of 1895, Art. VIII, Sec. 1.

1910 by voting in a town election "unanimously in favor of the surrender of the old Charter and accepting a new one."[191] The town was re-incorporated by Secretary of State R. M. McCown (a Florence County delegate to the 1895 Convention) on July 30, 1910, under the general provisions for the incorporation of towns of fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. These are generally unremarkable provisions, requiring the election of an intendant and wardens, giving police power, and granting the charter for a period of thirty years, following the guidelines laid down by the constitution. The fact that Maryville's charter would have expired anyway in 1940 perhaps indicates the urgency felt by those who demanded its revocation in 1936.

The most important aspect of the Constitution of 1895, in terms of its eventual effect on Maryville, was the consolidation of power at the state level. The Farmer Democrats held power in the state as a whole, but individual districts and counties might easily go Conservative, or even black-controlled, if the disfranchisement measures should somehow fail.[192] So although counties were given the duty of administering and enforcing the laws, the constitution trusted them with no legislative authority of their own. There was no county council, and when a county, town, or individual proposed changes in structure or policy, or needed approval for such projects as public works or a new town government, they had to go through the state legislature. In this way, the white Democrats of the upstate won control over the government of the entire state. By agreeing to this, whites in the black-majority lowcountry were freed from the prospect of "Negro rule."

The volume of local issues that came before the legislature precluded genuine consideration of all of them, and so a rule was adopted that any measure of purely local interest was to be passed if delegates from the place in question endorsed it. A county's

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[191]Sworn Returns of Election Managers, Tobias Capers, L. R. Chisholm, Middleton Grant, and W. M. Fitch, Notary Public [and a Charleston delegate to the 1895 Convention], July 25, 1910. South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

[192]Half of Tillman's white opposition to enshrining disfranchisement in the state constitution came from Democrats who believed that the measures would be declared unconstitutional, and would be invalidated by federal orders. They preferred such informal means as personal "persuasion" and the shotgun policy. Doubled and back-up measures were therefore appropriate. Simkins, 14-15, 205; Convention Journal, I. Harleston Read, 727.

legislative delegation, and especially its single senator, therefore became the final authority on matters that required state approval. The Maryville case indicates the power that this system gave to the delegation from Charleston.

Two separate bills for the revocation of Maryville's charter were introduced into the state legislature, one in 1933, the other in 1936. As local questions, both were immediately referred back to the Charleston Committee, and then passed in accordance with the committee's recommendation. In 1933 the bill died in committee because Charleston's senator withdrew his support, but in 1936 it was read three times in the Senate without objection and automatically passed.[193]

In fact, the legislature had rubber-stamped twenty-five charter revocations in the past five years. But why were these bills introduced in the first place? The answer seems almost ridiculous; they were the result of a state tax on chain stores. During the 1920s, large chain stores, like A. & P., Woolworth, and Piggly Wiggly, began to menace the livelihoods of the traditional store owners of the nation. The independent retailers, as they called themselves, organized anti-chain store publicity and lobbied for laws that would restrict chain store business. The stakes were high and the debate was virulent.[194] Both sides justly accused each other of waging a propaganda war in order to dupe the public. Chain store industry newsletters counteracted the anti-chain "agitation" of radio broadcasting and "trade-at -home campaigns."[195] Publications uncovering the menace of chain-store monopoly were called for to refute "the tremendous amount of propaganda being disseminated" on their behalf.[196] Radio broadcasts warned citizens of the evil that

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[193]Journal of the South Carolina House of Representatives, 1933 p.39, 89, 1936 p.1441; Senate, 1933 p.53, 1936 p.1610.

[194]Thomas W. Ross, "Store Wars: The Chain Tax Movement," *Journal of Law and Economics* 29, 125. See also Appel in Daniel Bloomfield, comp., *Chain Stores*, The Reference Shelf, Vol. 7 (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1931), 176: 4% in 1921 to 16% total chain store sales volume in 1928; U. S. Federal Trade Commission Report, 1934.

[195]Godfrey Montague Lebhar, *The Chain Store-- Boon or Bane?* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1932), 182.

[196]Rep. Gerald J. Boileau, introduction, *Wells of Discontent*, by Charles G. Daughters (New York: Newson and Co., 1937), 3.

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WON BY: L. E. BISHOP, 63 TRADD ST., CHARLESTON, S. C.

$5.00 Will Be Paid for the Best Dialogue. Send in Your Dialogue so That It Will Reach Us Not Later Than Next Friday.

they unwittingly did when they shopped at chain stores. The public was called on not only as a market, but as a political ally.

Part of the battle in Charleston County consisted of these outrageous cartoons from the Charleston *News and Courier* in 1930.[197] The words have evidently been sent in by sympathetic citizens, and published as part of an advertisement by the Associated Independents. A list of the stores in the association is printed beneath. The two on the left are nearly incomprehensible; "Foreign Owned Store" probably refers to a chain store with headquarters outside the state, rather than a store run by an immigrant. But the gist of the cartoon seems to be that something shocking is being said inside. In the cartoon at the upper right, the young white housewife is mouthing a bland and straightforward platitude about the quality of independent stores. The black woman's more complex verse emphasizes the important position of stores in the local economy, and the two small men, who are ambiguously situated in the scene, direct readers to patronize those stores which are actively defending themselves in the fight against the chains. It is interesting that there is no dramatic conflict here; all characters, black and white, animal and human, are called to the aid of the merchants. No one appears to represent the villainous tendencies of the chain stores; the top two cartoons especially, which perhaps were written by professionals and not contestants, present scenes of domestic tranquillity-- "Pantry Patter" in which all the speakers are affirming each other's opinions.

Not only are the interlocutors in accord with each other, but the black voice is dominant in every scene. The only thing the white woman utters is a short personal justification for shopping at independent stores. Otherwise she is a passive listener, with the implication being that she is going to act on the advice, even the orders, of the voluble black people who surround her. She is sized up as not crazy by the *black* cat, whose idiom is even more stylized than the humans'. Although the race of the radio announcer is not known, he or she adopts a popularized "black" style, thus gaining authority, or at least

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[197] *News and Courier*, 12/7/30, 1/31/31.

popular cultural legitimacy, in the style of the Amos and Andy shows of the time. The hegemonic voices in these cartoons are those clearly marked as black by white authors.

Black customers, feeling a greater need to save money by shopping at chain stores, may have been primary targets of these campaigns. If so, the merchants' advertising savvy must be questioned with respect to the appearance, dialect, and sentiment of the black characters. What black reader would be productively motivated by an invocation of the Lost Cause? The cartoon at the bottom right is the more intriguing because of the absolute blankness of mind it portrays on the part of the young mother and her simpering boy. They have absolutely no answer to the impertinent (and perhaps ironic) puns of the kindly gardener.

Some forms of anti-chain propaganda were more sophisticated. Many anti-chain crusaders based their rhetoric on the virtue of the independent store as the anchor of small town life. The store owner roughed it on the frontier with his hardy neighbors, and he became a pillar of the community as it formed, contributing to churches and to public works, as well as to the moral fiber of the community.[198] In many ways these arguments are reminiscent of Zora Neale Hurston's descriptions of the store as the "heart and spring" of the town. Hurston shows in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* a pioneering businessman setting up a store and a town in almost one single fell swoop, and then providing a forum for the maintenance of the town's cultural life. Montaville Flowers, a veteran of "the Lecture field, the Lyceum, the Chautauqua, the Political Arena, the Teachers' Institute, and the local and national organizations of business men," put it this way in a 1930 radio broadcast.[199]

> The old fashioned village store had humanity in it, which the chain store has not. It had kindness and love in it, which the chain store has not. It was the center of great local interests, which the chain store is not. It was the forum of free speech on the profound political and economic questions of the time, which the chain store is not. Think of a debate on government or religion in

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[198]Edward G. Ernst and Emil M. Hartl, "The Chain Store and the Community," in Bloomfield, 197.
[199]Montaville Flowers, *America Chained: A Discussion of "What's Wrong with the Chain Store"* (Pasadena, CA: Montaville Flowers Publicists, Ltd., 1931), 11.

> a Piggly Wiggly! And it rendered a great social service to the community, which the chain store does not.[200]

The independent store propagandists were striking a crucial chord when they argued that the American small town would be fatally damaged by the rise of the chain stores. Both intellectuals and politicians enshrined the town in American secular theology. Thorstein Veblen wrote in 1923, "The country town is one of the great American institutions; perhaps the greatest, in the sense that it has had and continues to have a greater part than any other in shaping public sentiment and giving character to American culture."[201] Veblen argued that this American character was based on the "retail-trade standards" of small-town merchants.[202] But the town was not only American, it was simply human; Alexis de Tocqueville had commented that "the village or township is the only association which is so perfectly natural, that wherever a number of men are collected, it seems to constitute itself."[203] He added that "a nation may establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty."[204] Tocqueville admired the abundance of this spirit in the towns of New England.

Unlike New England, the plantation South failed to develop towns as the basic unit of its society, despite the attempts of the colonial government to legislate the formation of towns along European lines.[205] After the Civil War, however, towns sprang up throughout the region around cotton gins, sawmills, and railroads. The populist revolution of the 1890s, especially in South Carolina, shifted authority from the plantation districts to these upstate communities.

The turn of the century and the two decades following was the zenith of American small town culture. During the 1920s small town life's pervasive spirit was ridiculed in

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[200]Flowers, 20.
[201]Thorstein Veblen, "The Country Town," in *The Portable Veblen* (New York: Viking, 1950), 407.
[202]Veblen, 416.
[203]Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: George Dearborn and Co., 1838), 41.
[204]Tocqueville, 42.
[205]Richard Lingeman, *Small Town America: A Narrative History 1620-The Present* (New York: Putnam's, 1980), 16-22.

serious literature, most notably in Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street*, which depicted a woman's "humdrum inevitable tragedy of struggle against inertia."[206] But by the 1930s small towns were almost universally seen as embodying an ideal America which was lost in the recent past. Even writers like Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson turned back to the small town. Anderson wrote at the beginning of his 1929 book *Hello Towns!* that the expressions "Main Street" and "Babbitt" "are too easy. There is too much malice in them."[207] Parts of William Faulkner's *The Hamlet* were published in magazines during the early 1930s. In his Frenchman's Bend, the country store porch-sitters are the chorus, the audience, and the players of the comic drama that swirls around them.[208] The climactic work of the small town cult was *Our Town*, a nostalgic look into the lives of an American small town family in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire.

It was towns like Grover's Corners to which anti-chain champions referred when they called for action to be taken against the forces that would destroy middle class communities.[209] The Federal Trade Commission, at the request of a Senate resolution, published a report in 1932 analyzing the potential harm that would be done to small towns by chain store monopolies.[210] But by this time, store owners, especially in the Democratic South and Midwest, had convinced their state legislatures to take action.

Georgia and North Carolina were the first, passing laws in 1927 that instituted heavy license taxes on chain stores.[211] South Carolina passed a law the next year, levying $100 per store on chains of more than five stores.[212] This law, like the anti-chain laws of several other states, was declared unconstitutional, and so it was repealed in 1929 and replaced with a law (which stayed in effect until 1990) which fixed "an annual license tax

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[206]Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Library of America, 1992), 485

[207]Sherwood Anderson, *Hello Towns!* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929), 19.

[208]William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* (New York: Random House, 1964).

[209]Charles Daughters, *Wells of Discontent, A Study of the Economic, Social, and Political Aspects of the Chain Store* (New York: C. G. Daughters, 1937).

[210]U. S. Federal Trade Commission, *Chain Stores: The Chain Store in the Small Town* (Washington: U. S. Gov. Print. Off., 1932).

[211]Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service, *State Law Index*, 1927-28 (also 1925-26) (Washington: U. S. Gov't Print. Off., 1928, 1930).

[212]S.C. Statutes at Large, 1928, Act 574, Sec. 24; *State Law Index*, 1927-28 no. 2, p.581.

on every person, firm, corporation or association engaged in the business of operating or maintaining in incorporated towns and/ or cities in this state under the same general management, supervision, or ownership one or more stores or mercantile establishments where goods, wares, and/ or merchandise are offered for sale at retail."[213]

South Carolina was the only state whose chain store tax law applied only to stores in incorporated municipalities. Not only that, but the law imposed a tax of five dollars even on the independent stores themselves. Taxing all stores, but the chain stores more, seems to have been part of the effort to make the law constitutional after it was struck down. It remains unclear why the tax applied only in incorporated cities and towns. But in 1931, in the pit of the Depression, the store owners of Maryville found themselves lacking five of the dollars that they would have counted on to get by. It is also possible that some of the store owners who did not live in Maryville owned other stores in the city, in which case their taxes would have been higher.

This situation was not taken lightly by store owners across the state. If they could do it without getting themselves in trouble with town leaders, they talked to their state senator about whether their town really needed to be incorporated. Store owners in Southern towns have always had the reputation of controlling votes by controlling credit, and their arguments hold weight with elected officials. The next year six small towns had their charters revoked. The year after that, seventeen towns were wiped off the South Carolina map. These towns were of every sort racially, and were scattered over all parts of the state. Most were very small, with populations of under five hundred people, and some of their charter revocations pointed out that they had ceased to function as towns. Some of these revocations also explicitly mentioned the "so called chain store tax act." The act repealing and canceling the charters of the towns of Bonneau and Hendersonville continued, "and all merchants in said towns are hereby relieved of all license taxes

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[213]S.C. Statutes at Large, 1930, Act 829, p.1384; Between 1927 and 1941, 28 states passed chain store tax bills, six of which were struck down by the courts and not replaced. Ross, 126.

outstanding and uncollected under the Chain Store Tax Act."[214] In Cottageville, the Tax Commission was ordered to discontinue collecting the tax upon cancellation of the charter, and the merchants of Givhans, Dorchester, Pregnall, and Ruffin were clever enough to have their representative write in a provision directing the refund of the Chain Store Tax in what had been those towns.[215]

A bill was introduced to the state legislature in 1933 to revoke the charter of Maryville. The town leaders called their lawyers, the Charleston firm of Shimel and Rittenberg, to defend their charter by lobbying the Charleston delegation. John Carr recalls that the town held benefit picnics and dances to raise money for legal fees.[216] The Maryville town council argued that their town should not suffer for the passage of a law in which it had no voice. After a short struggle they evidently prevailed. The Charleston newspaper reported that Maryville would "maintain its political entity by submitting to abolition of its right to levy a $5 tax annually on merchants of the town."[217] Two of these merchants were reported to have "pressed the move to revoke the charter."[218] Since the tax which must have been the one in question was not Maryville's to collect, and since it would have been illegal for it simply to have gone unpaid, perhaps the town agreed to pay the tax for the merchants if they would withdraw their requests for the anti-Maryville legislation. Somehow, the problem was solved, but only three years later it would come again, and there would be no way out.

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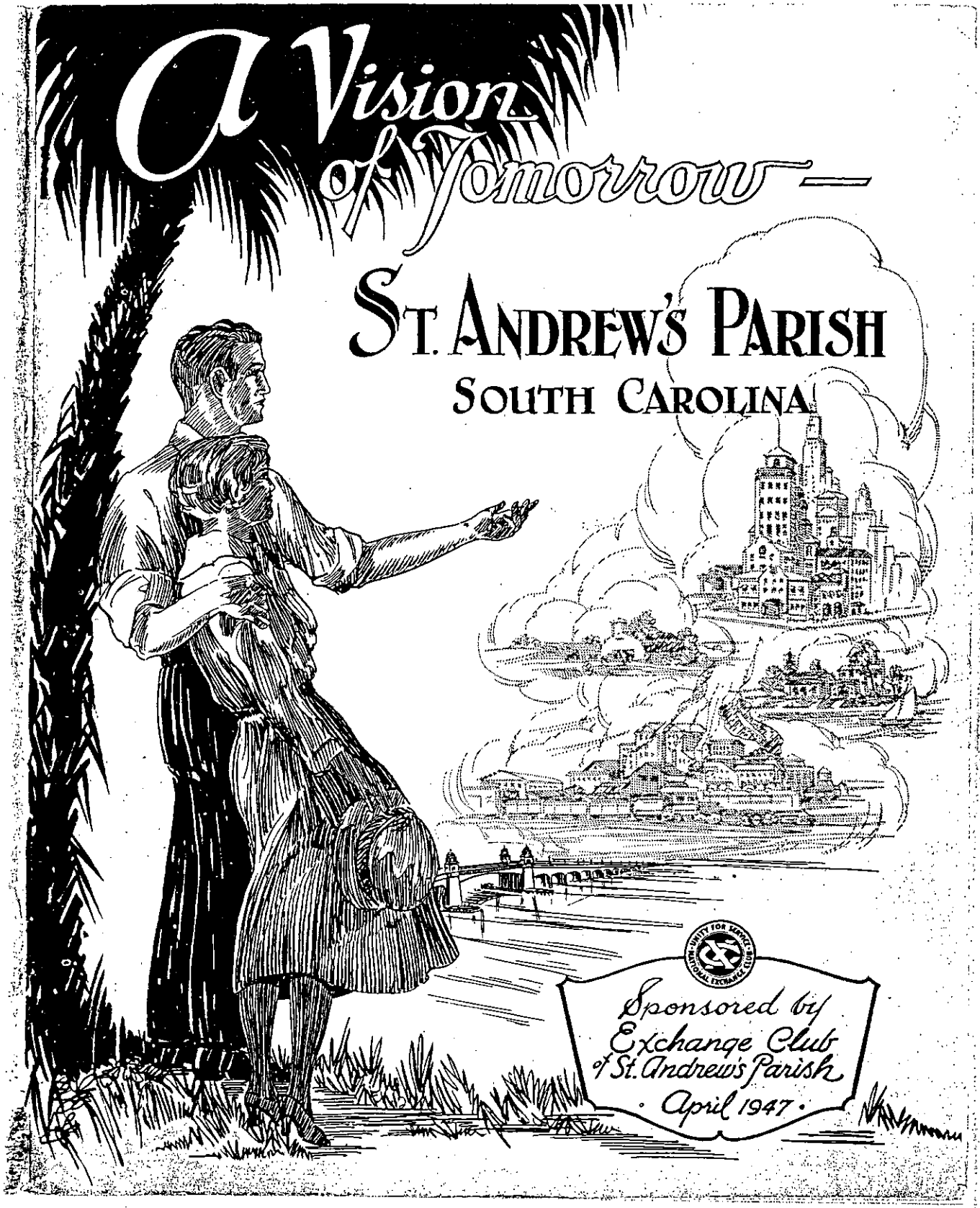
[214]S.C. Statutes at Large 1933, No. 443.
[215]S.C. Statutes at Large 1933, No. 474; No. 491.
[216]John Carr, interview by author, 12/30/94.
[217]*News and Courier*, 1/31/33.
[218]*News and Courier*, 1/19/33.


A Vision of Tomorrow —
ST. ANDREW'S PARISH
SOUTH CAROLINA
Sponsored by
Exchange Club
of St. Andrew's Parish
April 1947

Chapter Four

Maryville's Latter Days[219]

Today, according to all the older residents, Maryville is just not what it used to be. The changes are for the most part obvious. Of course it is no longer incorporated; Maryville community is not the town of Maryville, and the loss in 1936 was not only of a charter, a mayor, and a police force, but also of a distinctive status in the minds of the citizens. In fact they are no longer citizens in the literal sense; they are bound by ties of proximity, friendship, and kinship, but no longer by a political network. Other changes are far more tangible. The streets are paved and lit by electric lights; people travel by car instead of by foot or buggy. As a neighborhood in the inner suburbs of Charleston, the area is densely populated, with a house on nearly every lot, and there is a feeling of being in a part of the city, very different from being in a town surrounded by countryside. At the same time, Maryville, by growing more slowly, has retained a more rural atmosphere than the surrounding territory. In 1923, coming into Maryville meant leaving the open fields for clustered houses and shady streets. Now, on making the turn onto Sycamore Avenue, one goes from shopping centers surrounded by pavement to small homes with gardens.

These changes all began to occur about ten years before the town charter was revoked. In 1920, most of the land around Maryville was owned and farmed by J. M. Harrison. Maryville residents would walk through the woods and then across Harrison's farm on the short cut to Charleston.[220] They followed the line of trees that divided the fields from the river until they got to the Coastal Highway, and then crossed on an old wooden bridge that had replaced the ferry several years before. In 1926, the highway was

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[219]Illustration on previous page from: Exchange Club of St. Andrew's Parish, *A Vision of Tomorrow-- St. Andrew's Parish South Carolina* (Charleston, 1947), cover.

[220]Leroy Gethers, 10/27/95; Louise Brown, 10/25/95.

paved with concrete and a "magnificent concrete bridge" was built over the Ashley River.[221] In conjunction with the automobiles which were coming into universal use, this bridge brought parts of St. Andrews Parish and neighboring James Island into reach of the city's expanding population. The farmers of the area were stirred with development fever. The Jenkins family promoted their James Island development, Riverland Terrace, as "an ideal logical residential development in the pathway of the City's residential expansion, with values insured by its logical location and the aggressive program of development."[222] The Charleston newspaper greeted with banner headlines the arrival of Commodore J. Perry Stoltz, owner of a major hotel chain, who came to Charleston at the request of the Jenkinses and bought a large hotel there.[223] The paper worked hard to promote development, reporting in detail speeches involving the prospects of the city's real estate and business opportunities.[224]

J. M. Harrison evidently found that his land was becoming too valuable to farm. He sold 250 acres, about a mile from Maryville, to James S. Simmons in December of 1925.[225] The *News and Courier* observed that "for years it has been anticipated that on Mr. Harrison's lands, just across the river, a modern village would be springing up with the steady growth of the city of Charleston."[226] A few months later, the newspaper carried a front page story of Simmons' development, Windermere, that was basically an advertisement, emphasizing especially the "artistic" elements of the landscaping plan.[227] Simmons' own advertisement described Windermere as "a sub-division of 200 acres just across the Ashley River Bridge-- located along the Atlantic Coastal Concrete Highway and the road to Folly Beach. In the Direct Path of Charleston's Progress."[228]

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[221] *News and Courier*, 12/13/25, p.14; Exchange Club pamphlet, p. 30 (not numbered).
[222] *News and Courier*, 3/24/26, p.10.
[223] *News and Courier*, 3/21/26, p.1; 3/24/26, p.1.
[224] *News and Courier*, 3/23/26, p.10; 3/21/26, p.1.
[225] *News and Courier*, 12/13/25, p.14.
[226] *News and Courier*, 12/13/25, p.14.
[227] *News and Courier*, 3/21/26, p.2.
[228] *News and Courier*, 3/21/26.

Perhaps in the indirect path of Charleston's progress was Maryville, although it may have seemed at first that suburban development was good for the town. Mayor Thomas Carr and others found employment in the building up of Windermere and other suburbs in St. Andrews Parish. As a carpenter, Carr built several houses in Riverland Terrace and in other subdivisions farther up the Ashley River.[229] Carr had originally worked as a cooper on the Charleston wharves, until the widespread use of burlap bags after the Spanish-American War put him out of business. With the construction boom beginning in the twenties, Carr was able to put his skills to work in carpentry and "start making money."[230]

The influx of money and new residents slacked off with the Depression, but did not stop completely. During the thirties, despite the threat of charter revocation, life went on in Maryville much as before. Invincible Park still hosted concerts and house parties, often with two local brothers on guitar providing the music.[231] Sometimes the crowds got rowdy, and people had to be thrown in jail overnight. Some of these prisoners were white, and bitterly resented the insult of being jailed and reprimanded by black authorities. Perhaps the parents of some young Charleston man who had been imprisoned in the Maryville jail went to have serious talk with the judge in St. Andrews Parish about just who was in charge over there.[232]

The recent successes of the store owners of the state had revealed the vulnerability of towns to attack from their county's legislative representatives. The magistrate in St. Andrews Parish, Henry Struhs, although himself on good terms with Maryville's citizens, was faced with the prospect of bitter disputation of police authority in an area embedded in his district. He had remained impassive during the controversy over store taxes; that had been a matter between the town and the state. But now that there were more and more white residents of his district, and even within Maryville itself, he may have felt that it

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[229] John Carr, 12/30/94.
[230] John Carr, 12/30/94.
[231] Hazel Higgins, 11/7/95.
[232] Walter Jaudon, 10/30/95; Leonard Higgins, 9/20/94.

was his duty to protect them from the prospect of living effectively under black rule. Not only the revelers at Invincible Park were involved in the issue, though they may have been the examples pointed up to demonstrate the dire possibilities. During the twenties and thirties, several white families moved into Maryville itself. The town limits enclosed much open farm land, and some of these families did not consider themselves to live in the village of Maryville.[233] But they knew that they were technically in the town, and whether they were thinking about their personal safety or their property value, some must have expressed their discomfort to local judges and state representatives. Maryville's police are remembered for their modesty and restraint, and they willingly surrendered full privileges to county police in dealing with major crimes, but white South Carolinians of the 1930s were not about to look dispassionately past issues of race to assess the quality of local law enforcement.[234] Maryville was gaining a reputation as a town where black policemen lorded it over any white man or woman who came their way, and where the residents lived free from the jurisdiction of the county police. Judge Struhs may even have had it impressed upon him that this could put a damper on the surrounding area's development as one of Charleston's best suburbs.

At any rate, in 1936 another bill was introduced in the state legislature for the revocation of Maryville's charter. Judge Struhs wrote a letter to Charleston's state senator, Cotesworth Pinckney Means, pointing out that, since the county police had no jurisdiction in the town, "the white residents are at the mercy of these negroes. In my opinion it would be a benefit to the white residents of Maryville to have the charter revoked so as to allow the county police to have jurisdiction to make an arrest there."[235] Senator Means tried to put it more delicately when he said that the charter was revoked "to improve the policing, health, and road conditions of the area."[236]

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[233] Dorothy Gobel Seagle, 10/28/95; Mary King Hatcher, 10/28/95; John Carr, 12/30/94.
[234] Leroy Gethers, speech, 5/26/93; Walter Jaudon, 10/30/95; *News and Courier*, 12/25/31, *Evening Post*, 1/8/32 p.2.
[235] *News and Courier*, 6/2/36.
[236] *News and Courier*, 6/2/36.

It seems clear that black self-government itself was not objected to, but that black government of whites, and even black self-government in the immediate presence of whites, were the crimes of which Maryville was guilty. Senator Means explained that the sentiment for revocation was "due to the increased number of white residents of the community in recent years."[237]

The absence today of overt rancor between the black and white residents of Maryville and the surrounding area is remarkable in light of this long-hidden information about the revocation of the charter.[238] John Carr commented, for example, that he didn't know what the Johnsons and Brownlees, who moved in in the thirties, "had to squawk about." He characterized the neighboring white farmers as meek and friendly people, and was surprised to hear that Judge Struhs said such a thing about the town.[239] It seems strange, considering that the information was printed in the newspaper at the time, that the reasons for the revocation of the charter could remain such a mystery, and especially that any white malcontents would have been able or even willing to hide their motives from their black neighbors. The fact is, though, that everyone desperately wants to appear to be getting on well. Dorothy Gobel, whose father was one of the whites to come to Maryville in the twenties, said that she always had the most wonderful neighbors, black and white, but she is glad to have an eight foot chain link fence around her property.[240] Leonard Higgins confirms that he had fine relations with his white neighbors, the Plairs, though he adds that that did not apply if they were drunk.[241] Both black and white--publicly and perhaps even privately and personally-- paint the smoothest possible picture of their town history, and so its great rupture in 1936 has simply gone uninvestigated and unexplained.

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[237] *News and Courier*, 6/2/36.
[238] Undoubtedly part of the reason is that residents of Maryville are trying to be congenial with a white investigator by denying any suspicion of their white neighbors.
[239] John Carr, 10/28/95, 4/10/95.
[240] Dorothy Gobel Seagle, 10/28/95.
[241] Leonard Higgins, 9/20/94.

There is little indication that Maryville did, or could have done, anything to resist the revocation of its charter. Perhaps the citizens of Maryville trusted their white neighbors too much, or doubted that the bill would pass at all. Evidently, the town leaders received an offer of aid from a sympathetic communist organization. But Mayor Tom Carr suggested that the town council refuse the money, because otherwise their "children would have to bear the burden of being associated . . . with a communist group."[242] In the end, their children did not have to bear that burden, but neither did they receive the privilege of being associated with an all-black town.

The bill revoking Maryville's charter specifically provided that the neighborhood be "placed under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate and Rural Policemen of St. Andrews Parish."[243] The last man to be held in the town jail was a local bricklayer named Lawyer Pittman; it can only be speculated whether he felt relief or regret on being liberated by the St. Andrews Rural Police. After that the town hall was used occasionally for social functions, but it eventually fell into disuse and disrepair.

Fifth Avenue lost much of its former grandeur during the next two decades, as Middleton Grant's store closed after his death in 1935, St. Paul's Church closed, Deming School was consolidated with the Wallace school a few miles up the road, and Invincible Park was leveled for subdivision into small lots. The Seaboard Air Line discontinued its passenger service to Savannah, so many Maryville residents rode the freight train, "the Boll Weevil," until it stopped running completely, and Albemarle Station was torn down. In the 1940s the Ashley River Road was re-routed, and a major highway called St. Andrews Boulevard cut right through the middle of Maryville, solidifying a traditional distinction between Ashleyville on the east and Maryville on the west.

Despite these divisive and stagnating influences, Maryville managed to hold together and maintain a community life. The larger churches, Emanuel A.M.E., Jerusalem R.M.U.E., and Christian Baptist, played a major role, cooperating in 1951 to buy the town

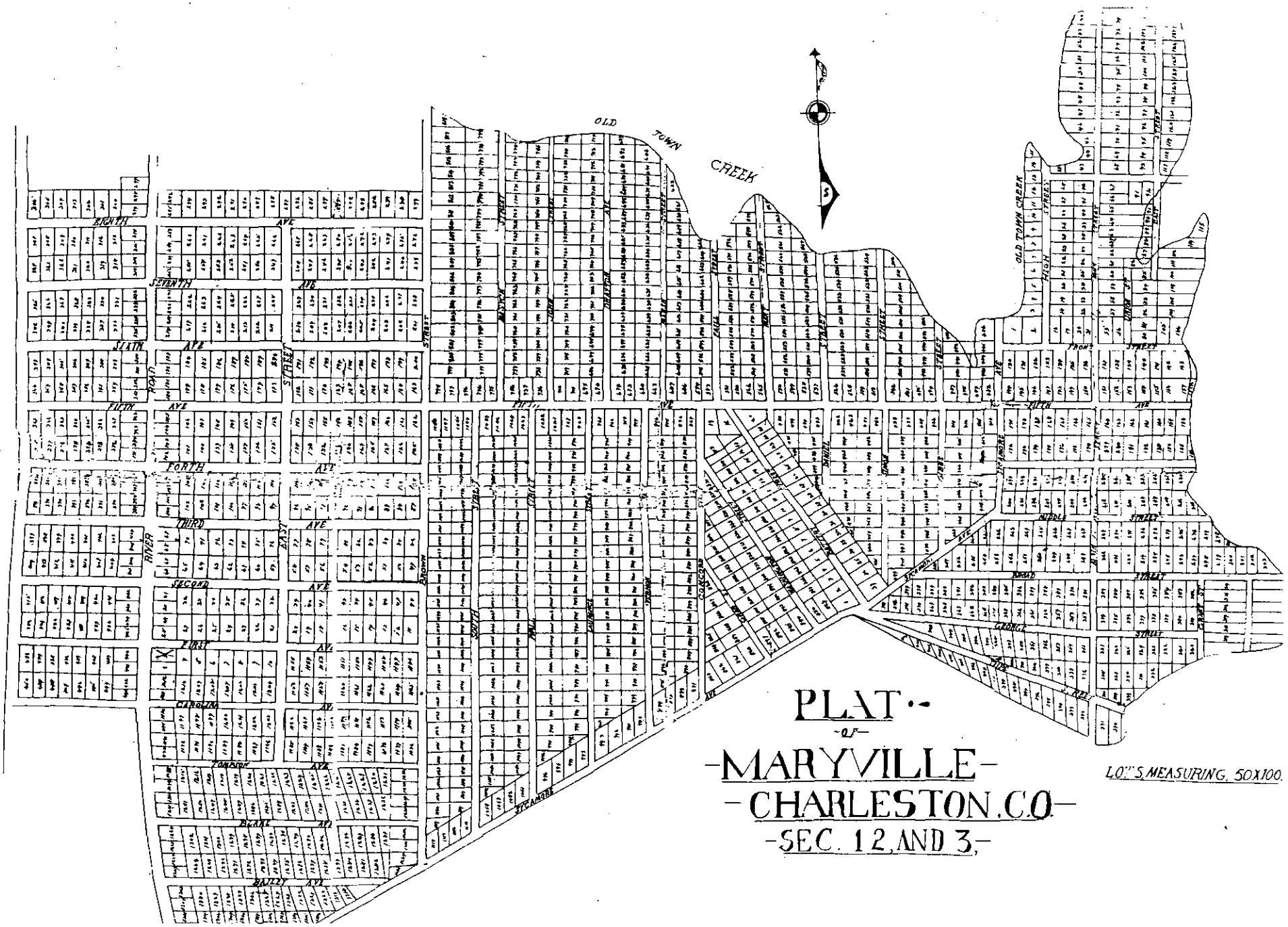
[242] John Carr, 12/30/94.
[243] S.C. Statutes at Large 1936, Act 1049.

cemetery from white neighbors, and continuing to this day to hold yearly Maryville Day services, with talks on Maryville history every evening for a week.[244] Civic associations, like the West Ashley Civic Association and later the Maryville/Ashleyville Association, took it upon themselves to petition for local improvements such as pavement of roads and to debate political matters like annexation into the city of Charleston.[245]

Annexation occurred in 1993 after many arguments and petition drives. Before that, the city limits had flowed around and beyond the neighborhood, leaving Maryville as a hole in the city, this time a political inversion from its position in 1923-- from a town surrounded by the county to a chunk of county surrounded by a town. Maryville itself was evidently divided on the issue of annexation, but again the major argument involved police presence; since Maryville had been shunned by the city as a poor tax base, it had to rely on county police in dealing with such formidable issues as drug-related crime. After annexation into the city, a Maryville resident named David Washington and his family decided to re-open the old store on River Road, now Magnolia Road, which they had bought from Rudolph Wigger in 1957. Washington believes that Maryville has become safer and more secure since annexation, and is optimistic about the prospects for his store, which still has Wigger's old icebox and butcher equipment.[246]

While David Washington preserves Maryville history by maintaining one of the town's landmarks, each resident has a different view of why the history of their town is important. For John Carr it is remembering the names and deeds of the "pioneers," the "anchor people" who came to Maryville during its first twenty years and shaped its institutions and landscape-- the Seabrooks, the Fords, the Williamses, and others who made the town into more than just a congeries of houses and gardens.[247] Carr belongs to one of these leading families: his father was the town's last and therefore its best-remembered mayor, and his mother was Mamie Carr, who delivered many of the children

[244]Clemon Richardson, 10/21/95.
[245]Leroy Gethers, 10/27/95; Emanuel A.M.E. Church Papers, Avery Institute.
[246]David Washington, 10/28/95.
[247]John Carr, 11/8/95.



PLAT
-of-
-MARYVILLE-
-CHARLESTON, C.O.-
-SEC. 12, AND 3,-

LOTS MEASURING, 50X100.

in town. Carr himself worked as the principal of the Wallace school for many years, educating the children of Maryville and surrounding areas.[248] He lives on Main Street, in a two-story white house on property that his father bought when he moved from Charleston in 1904.[249]

The Carr property comprises several of the fifty by one hundred foot lots that were laid out in the Maryville plat of 1886. The house is in the northeast part of this map, south of the street, now called Bender, which cuts across the peninsula.[250] Carr has a large yard, reaching across Bender Street up to around lot 46, including as lawn some of what is here depicted as marsh. He treats the whole area as his yard, mowing, fencing, and planting without regard to the old street location. But he is careful not to build anything there, because technically it is still a right of way and he does not own it. There is a sort of ghostly town represented by this map secretly underlying Maryville, preserving the original streets and blocks where people plant their gardens or build new roads.

This map never really did depict Maryville; it was a dream of Mary Taft and her surveyor, and a tool for conveying and transforming the blank land into an ordered town. In fact, when compared with other maps, this one is remarkably inaccurate. In real life, there is a significant curve in Fifth Avenue, and the V formed by River Road and Sycamore Avenue is much deeper. As drawn here, the plat emphasizes the grid, causing all the north-south streets to be parallel, which they are not. The grid was the dominant method of platting a town before the twentieth century. It has been described as a typically American way of laying out a town, "initially adopted for easy and rapid real estate development, but also . . . an ideal accommodating device for a more tolerant society."[251] This applied to Maryville in some ways, especially in terms of the ease of

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[248] John Carr, 11/8/95.
[249] John Carr, 10/11/95.
[250] Map courtesy of Mary King Hatcher; probably from the Plat of Maryville and Ashleyville compiled by Richard C. Rhett in 1929.
[251] Witold Rybczynski, *City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 80.

sale. The lots were fairly small, enabling many people to buy, even if they had not much money, but their configuration made them easy to group together to make a larger lot. Leroy Gethers, for instance, was able to buy a lot with his World War II discharge bonus, "cash no questions asked."[252] The reputed first mayor, Isaac Bright, bought the three lots at the northwest tip of the peninsula for less than the going rate of twenty-five dollars apiece, and Amerinthia Seabrook bought five lots in a row along the marsh.[253] The layout of Maryville, though it appears fairly homogenous on the map, was in fact centered on a focal point. The incorporation bill of 1888 described Maryville's boundaries as being one fourth mile to the west and north and one-half mile to the south from the "corner of Fifth Avenue and Main Street."[254] This point had been the center of settlement in the immediate area for over two hundred years, and as the site of Grant's store and Invincible Park, it continued to be a heart of the town, despite the fact that other institutions were strung out along Fifth Avenue.

Fifth Avenue, not Main Street, was Maryville's major thoroughfare. It is the only street that connects all the areas of town as shown on this map. The plat seems to have been divided into neighborhoods, with different sections having their own set of streets that did not coincide with others. There are six of these sections on this map, but it is unclear why they are there, other than in some places following the old divisions of the plantation. The town never filled up enough for all these streets to become operational, and so the sections they defined never came into being. In fact, Maryville became more heavily settled in two distinct sections. One, referred to by residents as Ashleyville, was along Main Street, and the other, called Maryville, was near River Road between First and Seventh Avenue. The attractions of the one were the marsh and isolation, of the other, the highway and the "business section." Houses were fewer in between, and some

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[252] Leroy Gethers, 10/27/95.

[253] Charleston County R.M.C., deeds in book A74, p.173, book A34, p.240.

[254] Statutes at Large of South Carolina, 1888, Act 69, sec. 1. There is a problem with these boundaries in that they include land to the south that was never owned by Mary Taft or settled by anyone, and land to the west that was platted and functioned as part of the town. In any case the corner of Fifth and Main was to be taken as the starting point.

parts of town were never settled at all. Everything south of First Avenue was used as farmland until it was developed after World War II, and so now its streets are the aimless curves of suburban landscape rather than the straightforward grid of an eager town. Another reason that this map does not look like Maryville itself is that, as mentioned above, people and institutions bought land of different sizes and shapes. A current map of Maryville is not this busy and regimented, and is criss-crossed by the railroad bed running east-west and the new highway running more or less north-south through the middle of the neighborhood.

Not long ago, a huge highway was projected to come through along the old railroad bed, but luckily for Maryville, other plans prevailed.[255] Today the threat to Maryville as a neighborhood is essentially similar to what it was in 1935 as an incorporated town. John Carr says he has been offered large sums for his property by real estate developers, who are eager to get their hands on land with marsh views so close to downtown Charleston. But he and others have held out. Property taxes are already increasing, and if some of the land in Maryville were developed, the surrounding area would become even more valuable, and long-time residents would have to move away because of the high taxes.[256] Many residents fear that some of the property, especially in the Ashleyville area along the marsh, will be inherited by people who do not live in Maryville, and sold off to the highest bidder.[257] Until then, they are solid in their resistance to outside buyers, and are acting on the assumption that they will keep their land, building houses and caring for the neighborhood.[258] John Carr's latest project is a "banana plantation" around his house. Someone gave him a plantain tree a few years ago, and he has propagated it until now his house is surrounded by the tropical trees, and a line

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[255]South Carolina Historical Society folder 32-98-2, Map of Inner Belt Freeway, Proposed Alternates.
[256]John Carr, 12/30/94.
[257]Walter Jaudon, 10/30/95. Mr. Jaudon, a middle-aged professional, was excited to learn that his grandfather had been the mayor of Maryville, and he was also eager to get to the bottom of the charter revocation. He knew of the Rosewood case, and considered the possibility that the State of South Carolina might be held responsible for its wrongdoing in revoking Maryville's charter.
[258]Pinckney Ezekiel, 10/23/95.

of them extends along his fence. He demonstrates his ability to put off prospective buyers by teasing a neighborhood boy hanging on his fence. "You want one of these banana trees?"

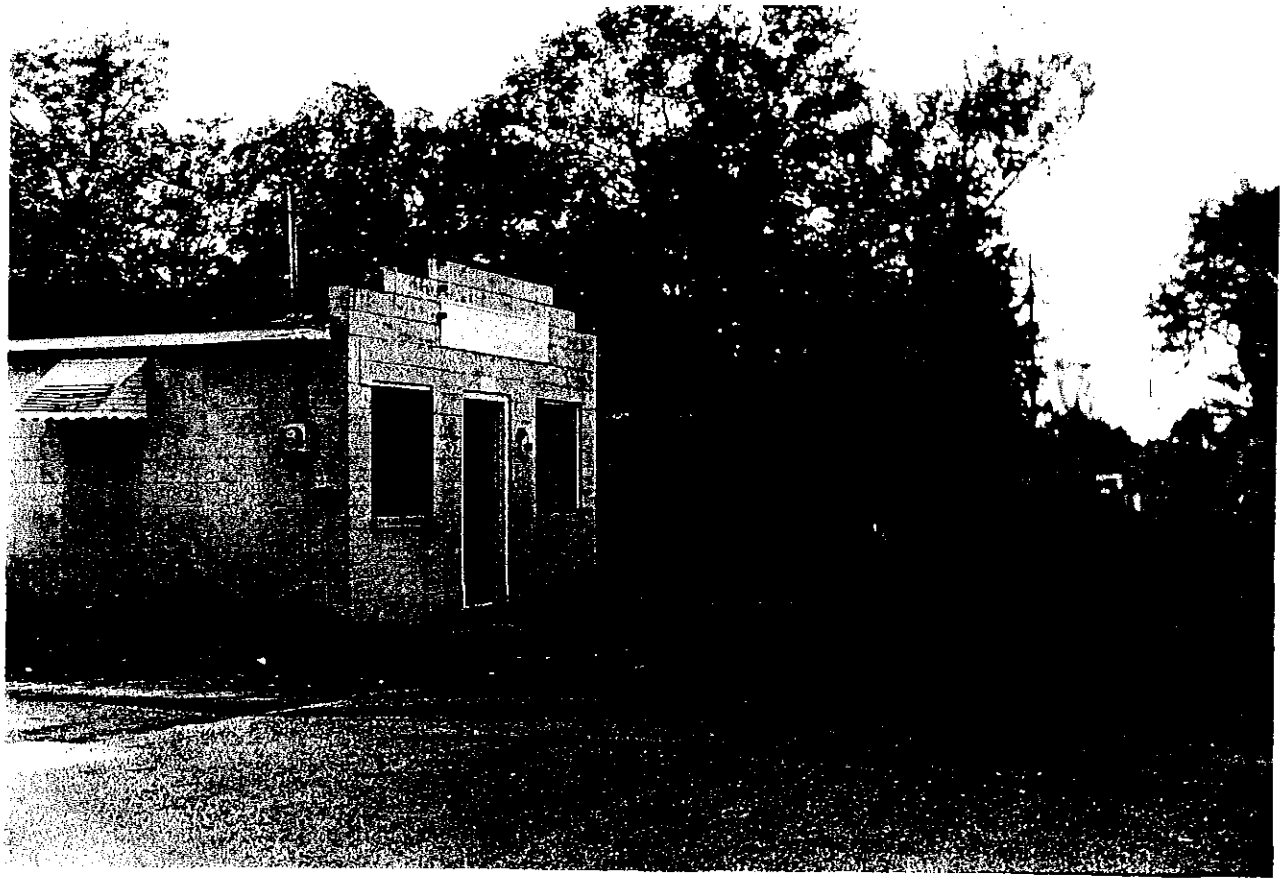
"Yes."

"How much money do you have?"

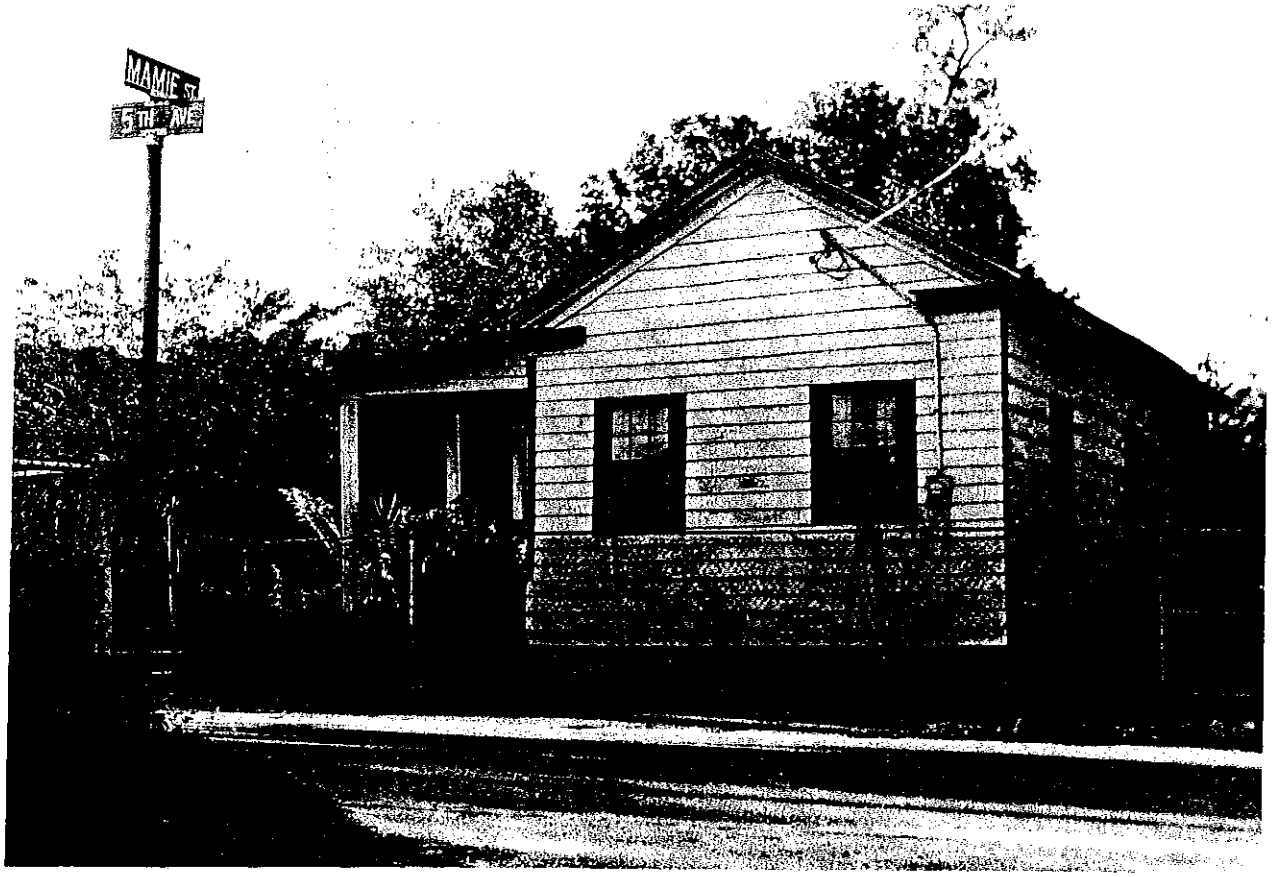
"Four dollars."

"Well I'll sell it to you for five. Go get another dollar and come back."

But the potential investor has lost all hope; he sees that the trees are not for sale, even though Mr. Carr proudly admits that he himself paid nothing for them.



1. Johnson's Store, on the site of Middleton Grant's store, looking south down Main, Fifth Avenue and Main Street.



2. One of the older houses in town, with a potted garden on the porch, Fifth Avenue and Mamie (Mary).

4. Wigger's Store, now owned and operated by David Washington and family, Fifth Avenue and Magnolia Road (River Road).

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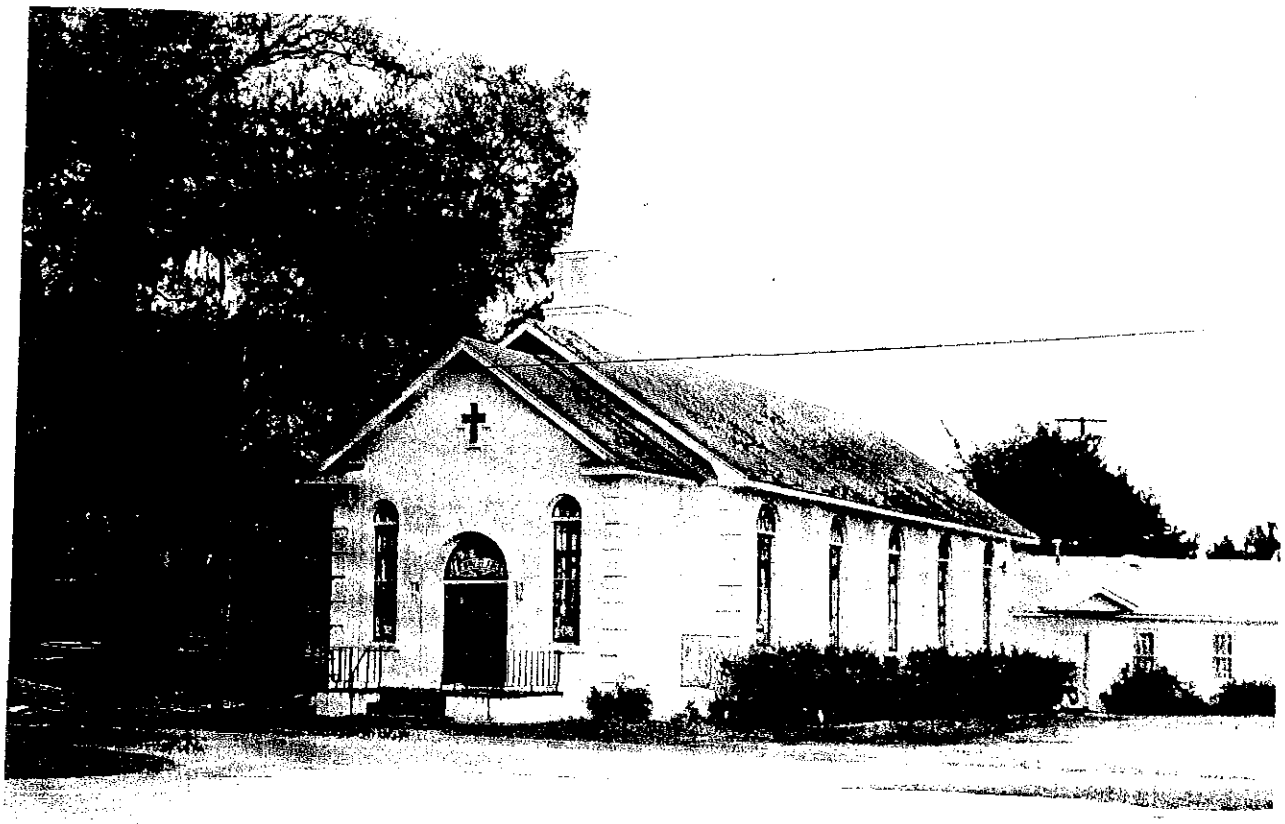


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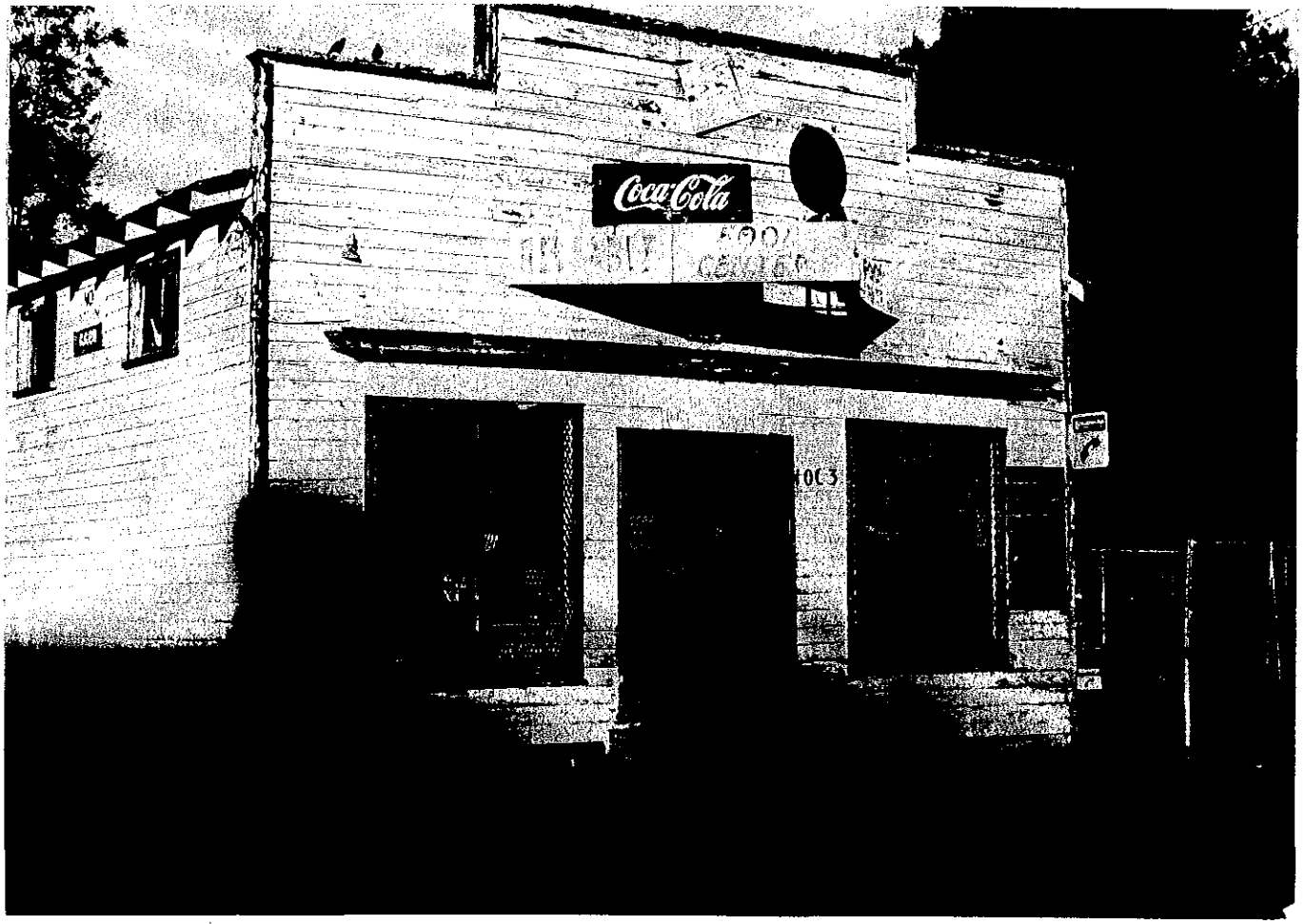
THE CHURCH OF GOD
WHICH HE HATH
PURCHASED WITH HIS
OWN BLOOD
SUNDAY SCHOOL 10 30 AM
SUNDAY WORSHIP 12 00 PM
EVENING SERVICE 7 00 PM
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY 8 00
FRIDAY PRAYER AND FAAST 8 00
REV PASTOR
BISHOP ISIAH BROWN FOUNDER
VISITORS WELCOME

Mr. John Carr. Magnolia 1995

Allen C. Hotchkiss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